Scaling Instructional Improvement: Designing a Strategy to Develop the Leaders of Leaders

Scaling Instructional Improvement:
Designing a Strategy to Develop the Leaders of Leaders

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.)
Capstone

Submitted by

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To Simon, Noah, James, Eamon and Gavin:

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If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
-African Proverb

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Table of Contents

Abstract

With close to 50 million children attending 98,000 public schools in the United States, the public school classroom continues to be an essential locus of change that, if improved at scale, could increase educational and life outcomes of many young people. Improved student learning requires an improved instructional core and school leaders are essential drivers of this improvement across a complex system of classrooms. The systematic study and codification of the behaviors, practices, and habits of "positively deviant" leaders–i.e. leaders who have consistently developed strategies to improve student learning despite facing similar challenges as others in similar circumstances–can help school and system leaders observe, create, and implement scalable effective practice. In this capstone, I describe a strategy to integrate design thinking and positive deviance to develop a desirable, viable, and feasible strategy to enable effective system-level instructional leadership practices to scale across a diverse educational system. Through my analysis of a strategic project I led at Relay Graduate School of Education, I explore the implications of these findings for my site, the sector, and for myself as a leader.

I. Introduction

The increasingly aspirational goals that our society has set for our nation's schools continue to outpace the organizational systems and the individual capacities of those responsible to deliver them. Across the nation, educators have been tasked to increase the number of students achieving "21st century skills" that include an increasingly sophisticated set of literacy, numeracy, and technical skills; add to this list habits of mind such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and innovation and educators today have no shortage of work to do (*21st Century Readiness for Every Student: A Policymaker's Guide* 2015). While these goals are both laudable and necessary, their day-to-day pursuit is daunting to those responsible for designing and implementing the educational systems required to achieve them. In a nation whose 98,000 schools and 3 million teachers currently serve approximately 50 million children, it is well known that today's educators struggle to ensure that all students, especially those historically underserved, achieve society's increasingly ambitious expectations for its education system (Concoran, Thomas, Goertz, 2005, p. 25).

As a doctoral resident with Relay Graduate School of Education (Relay) for the 2015-16 academic year, I have had the unique opportunity to embed myself in an entrepreneurial organization that is committed to "teach teachers and school leaders to develop in all students the academic skills and strength of character needed to succeed in college and life" (Relay, 2017). Over the last seven years, Relay has grown from a nascent idea shared by a few education leaders who wished to radically improve the quality of training that educators have prior to entering the classroom into a national, accredited institution of higher education currently serving more than 1100 teachers, 300

teaching residents, and over 340 school leaders across nine campuses.[1] While initially focused on teacher development, Relay leaders recognized that in the best of cases, great teachers are supported by great leaders and so in 2013, Relay launched the National Principal Academy Fellows (NPAF) program to improve sitting principals' instructional leadership skills and align the goals, tools, and capabilities of a school that would yield improved learning. Approaching its fourth year, Relay's Leadership Programs team seeks to do the same with system level leaders–principal supervisors specifically–in order to further support Relay trained principals and to extend the scale of this impact of these practices across the additional networks of school leaders they serve.

The focus of my strategic project was to study, design, and execute a strategy to increase the capacity of principal supervisors to become stronger instructional "leaders of leaders" across their districts and networks. In the following pages, I explore how design thinking and positive deviance—the persistent study, codification, and strategic spread of effective practices—provide insights and strategies that others can use to improve educational outcomes for the many children who our current educational system has failed. The results of this project suggest that if Relay hopes to achieve the impact on K12 student learning that it has promised, it may need to build new organizational capabilities to achieve its goal of spreading effective practice across a decentralized and diverse educational landscape.

[1] For more information, visit www.relay.edu/about.

II. Review of Knowledge for Action

A. Introduction

More than four decades of employment data indicate increasing demand for workers capable of "expert thinking and complex communication," (Levy and Murnane, 1996)[2] yet, multiple assessments of learning suggest that large tracts of our nation's students are not developing these skills. Results from the 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that 15-year olds in the United States perform below the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development averages in both math and science. Even more troubling, more than 25% of US students perform at the lowest level and fewer than 10% perform at the highest levels (Kelly, D., Xie, H., Nord, C.W., Jenkins, F., Chan, J.Y., & Katsberg, D., 2013).[3] Three decades of domestic reading and mathematics assessment data demonstrate the existence of a performance gap of more than twenty percentage points between white and non-white students in English and mathematics (*National Assessment of Educational Progress*, 2013) .[4] National reading assessments administered to 8th graders suggest that students in some states enter high school with less than half the proficiency rate in English or mathematics as students in other states, (*Education Consumers Foundation*, 2013).[5] These outcomes are products of a decentralized education system with a long history of inequity between schools and communities, a scarcity of effective teachers serving our highest needs students, and a series of social and education reforms that have yet to yield results long sought by their proponents (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2004; Mehta, 2013). Confronted with an

[2] See Appendix 1 for graphic display
[3] See Appendix 2 for graphic display
[4] See Appendix 3 for graphic display
[5] See Appendix 4 for graphic display

educational establishment that exhibits a staggering range of variability in the effectiveness of teachers, schools, and school systems, American parents must have extraordinary luck, knowledge, or privilege in order to ensure that their child receives a high-quality education day after day, year after year.

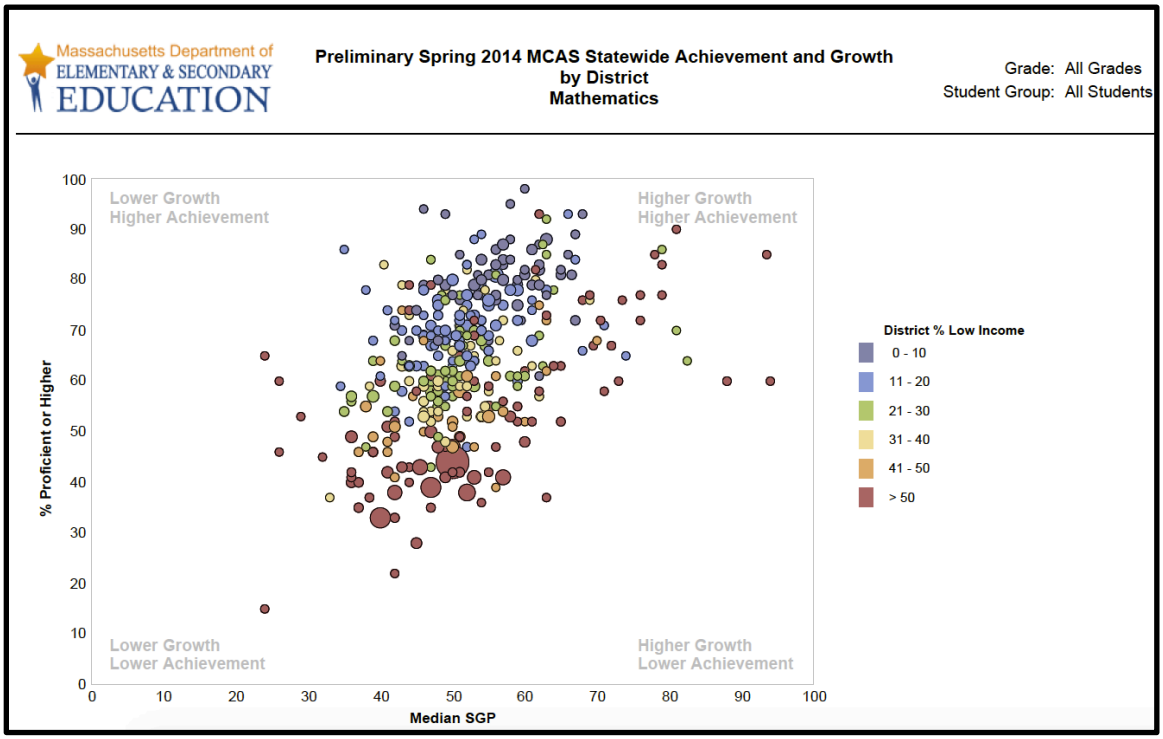
The question, *how to narrow variability and improve, at scale, the quality of education that all children receive* presents a "wicked problem" (Camillus, 2009). Such a problem is "tough or persistent," "has innumerable causes, is tough to describe, and doesn't have a right answer" (Camillus, 2009, p. 1). Wicked problems involve multiple stakeholders with competing priorities, causes that are entangled with one another, and solutions that are not clearly defined (Camillus, 2009). The tensions between local, state, and federal governance, the confluence of income inequality and systemic racial injustice, and the accelerating expectations placed upon educators make the question of how to narrow variability and improve quality a particularly challenging and urgent one to address.

On July 1, 2008, the first day of my career as a school principal, the wickedness of this problem became undeniably real. At a school located in a working-class community in Massachusetts, where a changed economy left behind empty mills and manufacturing centers, high unemployment, and an undereducated workforce, my school served a predominantly high-needs group of students, most of whom would be the first in their families to attend college. As with other schools serving predominantly low-income students, our students struggled academically and their academic trajectories seemed bound to follow that which their family's income would predict.

The following chart, produced by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, succinctly captures the relationship between income and academic performance in education. Each district in Massachusetts is represented by a bubble on the chart and is described according to these four dimensions:

Vertical Axis	Academic performance of student body in mathematics on the state assessment (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System)
Horizontal Axis	Median student growth percentile (a "value added" score based on the relative growth that students have made when compared to other students across the state who have similar academic histories)
Bubble Size	Number of students in the district (the larger the bubble, the greater the number of students in the district)
Bubble Color	Percentage of low-income students in the district (e.g. if more than 50% of students in the district are identified as "low-income" the bubble is red)

Figure 1: Preliminary Spring 2014 Massachusetts Statewide Achievement and Growth Results by district in Mathematics.



The prevalence of purple and blue dots toward the top of this data plot reveals the "expected" trend of students in affluent districts outperforming those in lower-income districts. But the presence of several red dots toward the top right of the chart reveals something else: there are a handful of low-income schools whose students achieve as well or better than their peers in more affluent districts. These schools, serving students who appeared to be no more privileged, affluent, or academically capable than my own, seemed to exist as "positive deviants," i.e. isolated instances of success or exceptions to the norm. In my role as a principal of a group of students who depended on their school to empower them with the skills, habits, and knowledge to be successful as adults, I was driven to figure out what these schools did each day to enable them to achieve these laudable results. Through regular school visits, conversations, and self-directed learning, I recruited teachers who would join me to voluntarily travel back and forth to Roxbury Prep, Boston Collegiate Charter School, Boston Preparatory Charter School, MATCH, Academy of the Pacific Rim, Neighborhood House Charter, KIPP Lynn and others to figure out *who, how, and what* was responsible for their demonstrated success and problem solve how to make it work in our school.

While it is one thing to observe someone else's exceptional practice, it is another to adapt the practice as your own, to engage others to adopt the practice, and to create conditions that allow the practice to spread from one community context to another. My interest in the wicked problems inherent in school reform and the potential for school and system level leaders to learn from "positive deviants" led me to the work of Richard Pascale, Jerry Sternin, and Monique Sternin, who relate their experience working in communities around the world to learn from "individuals who live and work under the

same constraints as everyone else, yet find a way to succeed against all odds" (2010, p.1). The understanding and approach they have constructed–from fighting childhood malnutrition in Vietnam, to decreasing hospital infections in the United States, to reducing infant mortality in Pakistan–provide insights into the power of observation. What are the conditions conducive to the adoption of effective practice? How does this practice spread from one context to the other? How might such insights be relevant to those wishing to improve educational practice across a diverse set of communities, contexts, and geographies?

In pursuit of answers to these questions, I offer an argument for why this work matters and how my role as a resident at Relay might enable me to design and execute a strategic project that has the potential to positively impact student outcomes across a complex network of diverse public schools:

- In a nation where the vast majority of children attend public schools, the public school classroom continues to be a high leverage locus of change that, if improved at scale, could increase educational and life outcomes of many young people; and
- Improved learning requires an improved instructional core and school leaders are essential drivers of this improvement across a system of classrooms; and
- The systematic study and codification of the behaviors, practices, and habits of positively deviant leadership can help school and system leaders observe, create, and implement common effective practice; and,
- There is an opportunity to develop an innovative leadership development model that enables positive deviant system-level instructional leadership practices to scale across the educational system.

In the following *Review of Knowledge for Action* I explore the rationale and research base that supports each of these arguments and I assert how my work with Relay provides an opportunity to apply this theory in developing a sustainable approach to

improve the quality and quantity of instructional leaders needed to reform this America's schools.

B. Improve the Instructional Core

In a nation where the vast majority of children attend public schools, the public school classroom is a high leverage locus of change that, if improved at scale, could increase educational and life outcomes of young people.

For approximately 180 days each year, roughly 50 million children engage in a remarkably similar routine: they get up, get dressed, and go to school. At school they are greeted by teachers: some new, some veterans, some effective, and some not so. Most of those teachers are hardworking, well intentioned, and genuinely interested in helping children develop the academic and social skills they need to thrive as adults. While some may contend that the traditional school model is grossly outdated and may be significantly disrupted within the next 15 years (Stinson, L., 2015; City, Elmore, & Lynch, 2012), today these schools aim to supply millions of children with access to caring, competent adults who have been tasked to develop within children the knowledge and skills to pursue a meaningful, purposeful, and productive life.

Teachers exert a tremendous amount of influence on the schooling experience for children; each of their countless decisions, no matter how small, has an effect on the quality of their students' learning. Which content to teach, which books to read, which standards to assess, which questions to ask, which activities to plan for, which students to call on, which students to push, which behaviors to address, which concerns to ignore, which groups to make, which parents to call… the aggregate of these daily decisions has powerful and lasting impact.

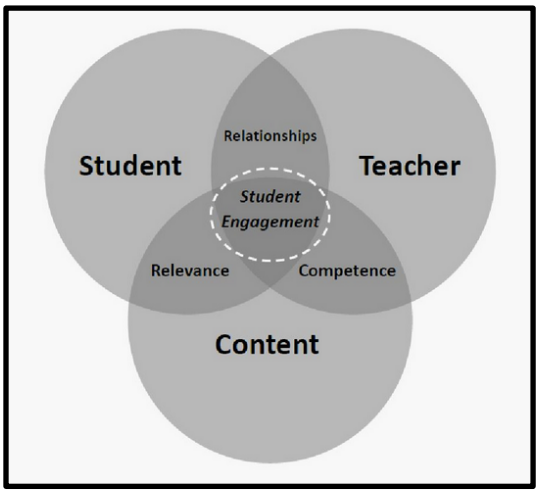
Recent empirical research has validated what parents have known anecdotally for generations: good teachers are essential and have the potential to have a lasting positive or negative impact on their students. Drawing on an extensive set of data from the Tenessee Value-Added Assessment System database, Sanders and Horn (1996), suggest that teacher effects on student outcomes are "both additive and cumulative, with little evidence that subsequent effective teachers can offset the effects of ineffective ones" (Sanders, W. & Horn, S. 1996. p1). These findings were echoed in 2004 by a meta-analysis of teacher effectiveness literature that suggests "teachers near the top of the quality distribution can get an entire year's worth of additional learning out of their students compared with those near the bottom" (Hanushek & Rivken, 2004, p. 15). The impact of effective teachers is not limited to student performance in school; it extends well beyond the age of eighteen. Using district student achievement data for 2.5 million Texan students in grades 3-8 and linking it to their tax records as adults, Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff (2011) find that students who are assigned to effective teachers are more likely to "attend college, attend higher ranked colleges, earn higher salaries, live in higher socioeconomic neighborhoods, and save more for retirement" later in life (p. 239). Stated another way, simply moving a child from a less effective teacher to a high-performing teacher will result in measurably improved, long-term learning outcomes for the child, regardless of the school they are attending.

Given the impact that teachers have on student learning, improving what takes place inside the "instructional core" where students, teachers, and content intersect, becomes central to any effort to improve teaching and learning (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Tietel, 2009). Extensive research confirms that observable teacher performance, as

measured by student assessment results and leader observations, is a more reliable indicator of effectiveness than traditional measures (credentials, experience, etc.) (Gordon, Kane, Staiger, 2006). These assessments of teacher effectiveness are aimed at the instructional core, where Richard Elmore (2008) suggests that in order for student learning to improve, educators must:

- Raise the level of content that students are taught
- Improve the skill and knowledge that teachers bring to the teaching of that content
- Increase the level of students' active learning.

Figure 2. The Instructional Core



(Elmore, 2008)

In classrooms where significant learning is taking place, one might argue that each component of the instructional core is sufficiently robust: teachers with strong content knowledge curate relevant learning experiences for students with whom they have mutually positive relationships. In classrooms where learning is lackluster, one or more of these elements are often weak. Successful schools align their resources, processes, and priorities in order to bolster the instructional core across a system of classrooms. The value of this framework to school improvement has led school system

improvement experts to place the "instructional core" at the center of large-scale education system improvement models (Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2007). As I will show in the next section, the principal and the principal supervisor are catalysts who can drive the change necessary to ensure that the product of these efforts is increased student learning across a complex system of classrooms and schools.

C. Leverage School Leaders to Drive Instructional Improvement

If improved learning requires an improved instructional core, school leaders are essential drivers of this improvement across a system of classrooms.

The instructional core has been impressively resistant to change. Efforts to improve the "content" area of this framework have led to the development of standards, assessments, and data systems to measure, at scale, whether or not students are learning (Mehta, 2013). Efforts to improve "teachers" have led to the adoption of a variety of teacher effectiveness measures: increasing the quality of teacher training, raising the bar for entry into the profession, improving on-the-job teacher development, tying teacher pay to performance. Efforts to improve students' readiness to learn have yielded numerous initiatives to improve access to early childhood education, renewed interest in social emotional learning, wrap-around services and alternative means to ensure that students increase the quality and quantity of time they spend in school.[6] While all may have potential to improve long-term outcomes for students, the extent to which these initiatives yield improved *student-learning* hinges on their ability to change behavior and practice within classrooms where teachers, content, and students interact.

[6] In "The Allure of Order" (2013), Mehta provides a detailed history and outcome of each of these reform efforts.

Many researchers have attempted to describe the extent to which school leaders directly or indirectly affect student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). In a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation that examines a wide range of school leadership research, Leithwood, Louis, and Anderson find:

1. Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that contribute to what students learn at school, contributing up to a quarter of total school effects.
2. Leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most…indeed there are virtually no instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. (Leithwood, Louis, & Anderson, 2004, p. 7)

Drawing on extensive data sets matching Texas students, teachers, and principals, Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2013) find that "highly effective principals improve achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single year. Ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount" (p. 62). These findings are echoed by others who find the school leader to be a key driver for improvement (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012; Bryk, 2015; Duncan, 2014; Elmore, 1999; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Leithwood, Louis, & Anderson, 2004; Marshall, 2013; Marzano, 2005; McCall, 1998).

If school leaders matter, as suggested by the evidence, then understanding what effective leaders *do* is paramount. In their 15-year meta-analysis of school effectiveness research, Hallinger and Heck find that goal setting is a practical and potent lever that effective leaders use to improve educational achievement within their schools (1996). Wallace Foundation researchers find that skilled leaders effectively set vision, develop talent, and ensure that the execution of the organization's work is aligned to its mission (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 5). In the 2010 large-scale study of school improvement

efforts across Chicago Public Schools, Bryk suggests that school leaders are key drivers for improvements in four other organizational subsystems: they strengthen parent and community ties, increase professional capacity of the faculty and staff, improve a student-centered learning climate, and execute a well-developed instructional guidance system (Bryk, 2010). The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) argue:

> An expanding base of knowledge from research and practice shows that educational leaders exert influence on student achievement by creating conditions conducive to each student's learning. They relentlessly develop and support teachers, effectively allocate resources, construct organizational policies and systems, and engage in other deep and meaningful work outside of the classroom that has a powerful impact on what happens inside it. (p. 1)

These findings are the result of numerous studies that have attempted to capture the specific knowledge and skill a school leader must possess in order to successfully impact student learning (Flanary & Simpson, 2008; Levin, 2008).

Naming the essential skills and knowledge of an effective school leader is one thing. Developing the capacity of others to achieve them is another. In a decentralized system of education such as the one that exists in the United States, the challenge to build a cohesive approach that supports leaders to develop and align their goals (outcome measures), tools (curriculum, assessments, etc.) and talent (professional skill and will of its workforce) has stymied decades of education reform efforts (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). This project looks to positive deviants who may provide insights that can inform current and future efforts to do so in service of improving student outcomes at scale.

D. Employ Positively Deviant Instructional Leadership Practice

The systematic study and codification of the behaviors, practices, and habits of positively deviant leaders can help school and system leaders observe and create a common understanding of effective practice.

D1. Positive Deviance Explained

Pascule, Sternin, and Sternin (2010) suggest that a close examination of the practices of the "positive deviant," the person or people, who succeeded against all odds, provides important lessons on which to build scalable change. The essence of this conclusion is illustrated in the authors' report on their work with the Ketchua Indian communities located in the high plains of Bolivia where children suffered from unexplainably high rates of "stunting," i.e., slower growth for age (2010). Previous studies had concluded that malnutrition was not a cause of stunting: children in this community had received the same types of food, prepared in the same way and delivered in the same amounts, as in other communities. An astute observer noticed a subtle difference in the way that one "positively deviant" mother (whose children were normal height) served soup to her children: "instead of dipping off the top of the kettle, as was the common practice, she very deliberately scooped down to the bottom of the pot and ladled the child's bowl full of solids-carrots, potatoes, and fish" (p. 9). Close observation of one mother's practice shed light on a key practice that mothers could make to improve the well-being of future generations. Following this observation that it was not "what" was in the soup, but "how" the soup was served, the team created a visiting program so that other community members could observe this practice in action (scooping from the bottom), observe the health benefits on its youth (normal growth), and engage the actors (other parents) in discussions that could change cultural practices.

Pascale, et al. explain that this "positive deviance" approach, the act of looking closely at the practice and behaviors of those who are experiencing success, is essential when addressing problems that "1) are enmeshed in a complex social system, 2) require

social and behavioral change, and 3) entail solutions that are rife with unforeseeable or unintended consequences" (p. 10). A unique attribute of this approach is that it views the social system in which the behaviors and practices occur as a vital element that must be attended to when attempting to spread successful practice. The approach warns against the prevailing method of "best practice spreading" in which a few experts get together to identify and disseminate effective practice, providing largely technical tools and their positional authority to change behaviors, and instead suggests that a different approach must be used when those who have identified the practice lack the positional, political, or social power to spread the practice. Instead, they must find alternative ways to engage others to adopt it.

D2. Applying Positive Deviance in Education

In the education sector, positive deviants often exist as individual teachers, principals, and schools whose students, on average, significantly outperform similar peers. While popular culture provides us with exemplars like Jaime Escalante in *Stand and Deliver* who have staying power in our social consciousness, countless teachers (such as some of my own), numerous institutions (such as the Boston charter schools listed earlier), and even a few school systems (like Uncommon Schools) stand out as positive outliers who consistently elicit above average results (Bain and Co., 2016; Broad Foundation, 2013; Angrist, 2013).

The checkered history of national education reform is replete with numerous attempts to codify and spread effective practice. Supporters of the effective schools movement of the 1970s insisted that educators could learn from the observations of high quality schools which included: "strong administrative leadership, high expectations for

achievement, an orderly learning environment, an emphasis on basic skills and frequent monitoring of student progress"(Mehta 2013, p. 109). Artifacts of each of these tenets have been reproduced since the publication of *Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983) and have led to an era of standards-based accountability, the establishment of federally supported initiatives such as the "What Works Clearinghouse"[7] the "Effective Practice Incentive Community,"[8] and Race to the Top, the controversial and influential federal initiative that incentivized state and local educational agencies to adopt aggressive reform strategies born out of effective schools (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2016; Cody, Wellington, & Chaplain, 2009; US Department of Education, 2009). Charter schools in particular were marketed to the public under the premise that these schools, whose increased autonomy (operating with appointed, rather than elected boards, free from constraints imposed by teacher unions, etc.) would also be met with increased accountability (authorized by an external agency, they could be closed if they did not fulfill the terms of their charter), would serve as innovative laboratories where new approaches to schooling children could take place (Merseth, 2009).

While national charter school effectiveness, on average, has been mixed and charter schools only serve a tiny fraction of the school children in the United States (4.6% nationally, as of 2013),[9] a small but growing number of schools have managed to devise impactful practices to teaching and learning that may be worthy of close study and

[7] What Works Clearinghouse is an online initiative from the Institute of Educational Sciences that researches, documents and disseminates effective interventions in schools http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/aboutus.aspx

[8] Effective Practice Incentive Community was an $88 million dollar initiative to reward the highest performing teachers and leaders from around the country in exchange for their willingness to collaborate with New Leaders for New Schools to create a "knowledge system" of effective practice that could be more widely disseminated. For more information, please see http://www.newleaders.org/what-we-do/epic/ or files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED507497.pdf

[9] National Center for Education Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgb.asp

dissemination (Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, & Dwoyer, 2010; CREDO, 2015; Merseth, 2009; Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2011).

As a result of my placement at Relay GSE and its relationship with Uncommon Schools, I have gained access to a window into a system that uses a strategic approach to study positively deviant teachers and leaders among their team in order to teach others to adopt or adapt these practices in their own work.

Among urban schools, Uncommon consistently achieves positively deviant results.[10] Winner of the 2014 Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools, Uncommon's results include:

- "Closing 56% of the achievement gap between African American and White students and between low income and more affluent students on reading, math and science assessments,
- 90% of students complete high school within 5 years,
- High school seniors score above the national average on SATs (averaging 1570 vs. 1497) and 100% are admitted into college,
- Almost 50% college completion rate (2004-2007), almost 4 times the national average for urban school students, and
- More than 50% of students take AP exams (2012), with 75% who score a 3 or higher
- One of its high schools (North Start Academy College Preparatory High School) competes alongside students from the top 10 countries in reading on PISA. ("White Paper", Broad Prize for Public Charter Schools, 2014)"

In their leadership roles at Uncommon Schools, Doug Lemov (Managing Director) and Paul Bambrick-Santoyo (Chief of Schools) now head teams that observe and analyze the practices of the highest performing teachers and leaders within their schools in order to build out a system of organizational frameworks, instruments, and teaching tools to increase the instructional and leadership capacity of their workforce.

[10] See Appendix 5 for example chart of these results

For leaders, these practices have been documented in *Leverage Leadership* (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012) where Bambrick-Santoyo describes seven replicable "levers" of leadership that have been developed, honed, and employed by leaders across Uncommon Schools and throughout Relay's leadership development programs. These levers exist as both instructional and cultural leadership competencies that Bambrick-Santoyo asserts principals, and principal supervisors, must proficiently employ.

Instructional Levers	***Cultural Levers***
1. Data-driven instruction. Define the roadmap for rigor and adapt teaching to meet students' needs. 2. Observation and feedback. Give all teachers professional, one on one coaching that increases their effectiveness as instructors. 3. Instructional planning. Guarantee every student well-structured lessons that teach the right content. 4. Professional development. Strengthen both culture and instruction with hands on training that sticks.	1. Student culture. Create a strong culture where learning thrives. 2. Staff culture. Build and support the right teams for your school. 3. Managing school leadership teams. Train instructional leaders to expand your impact across the school.

(Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012, p. 10)

Beyond naming these competencies, Uncommon has developed specific ways to spread the practice through the organization by providing:

- Extensive professional development time to leaders (that takes place individually, in teams, and in large groups)
- Detailed, comprehensive, practice-based content and materials (including books, videos, templates and practice protocols) that are organized to enable participants to "see it, name it, do it" (Uncommon Schools Leading PD Training Materials, 2016).
- Professional development delivery by positive deviant leaders and content experts who have consistently "walked the talk" (Interview notes with Rector, July 2015).
- A pedagogical approach that prioritizes practice, i.e., the systematic, real-time practice of specific, high leverage moves.

- Ongoing monitoring to determine how the practice is implemented.

While it serves as only one of many examples of organizations that have strategically developed the means to engage in self-study, Uncommon's codification and dissemination of practice aligned to its values and the depth of its systems and solutions make it a valuable site to study.

D3. The Role of Practice

Deliberate practice proves to be a unique and potentially powerful differentiator in developing professional capacities in a workforce as compared to other professional development approaches. Seeking to develop "expert" teachers and leaders, leaders in these organizations ground their approach in the work of researchers whose study of skill acquisition suggests that hard work and focused practice are key ingredients accelerating performance across numerous domains (Ericsson, 1993; Bloom, 1985; Dweck, 1996; Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman, 2009).

Noted scholar Anders Ericsson debunks the myth that expertise is innate (1993). He argues that while extensive evidence suggests optimal learning takes place when three conditions are met (learner demonstrates sufficient motivation to improve, teachers incorporate the learner's preexisting knowledge into the task design, and the teacher provides immediate useful feedback and knowledge of results), "deliberate practice", i.e. practice that is targeted on isolated, vital areas of growth and are aligned to an end goal, is a critical differentiator between experts and non-experts.

> Deliberate practice entails engaging in a focused, typically planned training activity designed to improve some aspect of performance. During deliberate practice, individuals receive immediate informative feedback on their performance and then can repeat the same or similar tasks with full attention toward changing inferior or incorrect responses, thus improving

> the identified area of weakness. (Duckworth, Kirby, Tsukayama, Berstein, & Ericsson, 2010, p. 174)

Practice–specifically that which is intentional, focused on improving an important and challenging task, and rigorous–is a core pedagogical practice that experts across disciplines expect coaches to engage them in in order to accelerate their performance. Best-in-class professionals, especially those engaged in performance professions–musicians, actors, athletes, physicians, chess players, etc.–habitually rely on coaches and trainers to design and oversee superlative practice sessions that enable them to build skill in the areas most needed. So, what does this look like for educators? What are the practices and how might they be incorporated into a training model that engages others to accelerate their development?

D4. Enabling Positively Deviant Practice to Spread Across a School System

At Uncommon Schools, system leaders have developed the organizational capabilities to consistently observe (in person and via video) their teachers and school leaders and closely study those whose results outperform their peers within the network. They form working groups of teachers and leaders to analyze their effective practices and to distill the core elements, and then embed these practices into a professional development scope and sequence for faculty, school leaders, and system level leaders (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2012; Lemov, 2011). Deliberate practice is then integrated into the regular coaching and feedback cycle during which instructional leaders perform weekly observations of classroom teachers and then engage in a face-to-face discussion that provides the teacher with an opportunity to reflect on what was observed, determine the

most important action step that the teacher could then take that would improve learning for students, and plan and practice what this change might look like.[11]

In an effort to expand the scale and impact of Uncommon, Relay Graduate School of Education was founded in 2007 to meet a growing demand for effective teachers. Its name, "Relay" comes from the founders' interest in operationalizing the call to improve high need students' long term outcomes by providing them with a "relay" of effective teachers (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2011). Now in its eighth year of operation, Relay's organizational goals are to ensure:

1. "The teachers and principals (Relay) trains and develops will have a meaningful impact[12] on K12 students
2. Our graduate students–and undergraduates and other trainees–will have a meaningful experience at Relay GSE.
3. As an institution, we will create meaningful tools and systems to help shape American P-K12 and higher education." (Relay Performance Management Guide, 2016, p.9)

Working from the assumption that leaders can positively, and negatively, influence the development of teachers, Relay GSE embarked on the establishment of a leadership development program in 2013 in order to help it further achieve its organizational goals. The resulting National Principal Academy Fellows (NPAF) program serves over 300 current school leaders, representing equal parts public charter and district schools from around the country, who participate in a one-year fellowship to build skills in six content areas drawn largely from Bambrick-Santoyo and Lemov's work:

- Leading Data Driven Instruction

[11] See Appendix 6 for a sample "6 Steps for Effective Feedback" protocol that illustrates the components of this conversation and the role that practice plays in it.
[12] By "meaningful" Relay GSE prioritizes student performance on state assessments as evidence of impact, "net promoter scores" for participant experience, and market demand for its tools (are users using the tools the organization creates/provides) as evidence of success.

- Improving Student and Staff Culture
- Conducting Observations and Feedback
- Leading Adult Professional Development
- Identifying Effective Reading and Mathematics Instruction
- Setting High Behavioral and Academic Expectations

In order to build competency in these areas, participants attend a two-week summer intensive course, followed by four, 3-day "intersessions" where they have the opportunity to "see it, name it, do it" (where "it" refers to documented effective practice) as well as engage in planning sessions to accelerate implementation once at home. A particularly unique characteristic of Relay's approach to principal training is the deliberate integration of charter and district leaders. Insisting that "a good school is a good school, regardless of its governance system" (conversation with Jesse Rector, Dean of Leadership Programs, July, 2016), Relay's aim is to increase the instructional leadership capacity of a diverse group of school leaders from an equally diverse set of schools from around the nation. How to best enable a diverse (measured by geographies, governance, experience, race, gender) set of school leaders to observe, describe, and deliberately practice specific leadership skills is a question that is central to Relay GSE's leadership development strategy.

Another unique feature of Relay's approach is its inclusion of deliberate practice of core skills that it believes instructional leaders must master in order to be highly effective. Relay leaders believe that instructional leaders in today's schools must also relentlessly practice, and become proficient at leading weekly data meetings, conducting observations and providing feedback to faculty, and leading school culture initiatives. In order to build skills in these areas, they are provided opportunities to "see it" (examine video or live models of exemplar practice), "name it" (describe and discuss what

specifically makes the practice effective), and "do it" (plan, practice, receive feedback, and do it again in the moment). Relay leaders assert that this cycle enables participants to build reflexive memory around the key practices they are seeking to learn. Relay prioritizes live assessment of skill (video of leaders doing the work) over more traditional academic exercises devoid of performance.

D5. The Role of the Principal Supervisor

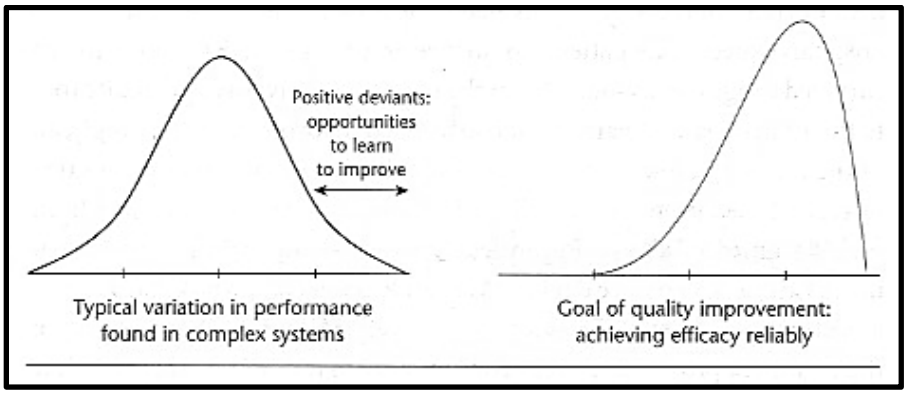
"See the system that produces the current outcomes"[13]

Classrooms, schools, and districts are complex social systems whose outcomes are the result of numerous interacting components. Children, families, teachers, and leaders operate within sets of schools where different choices in curriculum, assessment, schedules, and resource allocation produce radically different outcomes. With changes in leadership at the school or district level come new initiatives which are frequently layered on top of previous unrealized systems that were designed to achieve a different set of priorities. Each new initiative – standards, assessments, lesson planning templates, teacher evaluation systems, observation protocols, family and community outreach surveys, school schedules, team structures – forces the system's front-line assets, teachers and school leaders, to pick and choose which they prioritize and which they do not. This variability in inputs, by definition, produces variability in output. Without someone, somewhere, working to curate coherency at a system level, the system, more often than not, proliferates the inequities that it was designed to mitigate.

[13] Improvement principle #3 based on the work of Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, in "Learning to Improve" by Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, LeMahieu, 2015.

As Bryk, et al., suggest, one of the goals of a system-level leader is to narrow variation in performance, with the purpose of "achieving efficacy reliably" (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, Lemahieu, 2015, p. 55). This goal is illustrated in the following figure.

Figure. 3 Variation in performance: what we typically have and what we would like to see



(Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu, 2015, p. 55)

In order to do this, Bryk, et al., suggest that education leaders pay attention to Pascale, Sternin and Sternin's "positive deviants" and spend time observing, with a careful eye, the practice of those who are being successful.

As it turns out, just as positively deviant principals possess deep instructional leadership skills, so too do their supervisors. As the "instructional leader of leaders" principal supervisors who are charged with recruiting, retaining, managing, and developing a team of effective instructional leaders must command a broad set of skills that until recently, has remained largely undefined. The 2015 Principal Supervisor Standards, a joint product of the Council of Chief State School Officers and The Wallace Foundation, state:

> Now more than ever, today's school principals need support for their development and growth. The performance of principals is under scrutiny like never before, as society places higher expectations on principals to be instructional leaders who improve

> student learning and achievement. In districts around the country, principals are at the forefront of implementing new college-and career-ready standards, student assessments, and teacher evaluation systems. (Council of Chief School State Officers, Wallace Foundation, 2015, p. 1)

Following a multi-year initiative to research and develop standards for principal supervisors, this partnership identifies an integrated set of dispositions and standards that principal supervisors should aim to embody.[14] Of note in these standards is the recommendation that principal supervisors commit substantial time, coaching, and oversight to ensuring that principals develop the instructional leadership skills necessary to lead teachers and students to improved learning outcomes. Commanding a birds-eye view over numerous schools, these leaders possess a unique system-level perspective that enables them to identify trends across schools, "positive deviants" in their midst, and sites where additional support is necessary.

While the title of the principal supervisor varies by system (superintendents, instructional or area superintendents, executive directors, chief academic officers), a growing number of districts and charter management organizations are reexamining the role, responsibilities, and potential of these leaders to drive instructional improvement across a network of schools and classrooms. A 2015 Wallace Foundation study of the changing role of principal supervisors offers specific recommendations that are aimed at increasing supervisor capacity to lead principals to become stronger instructional leaders:

1. Define and clearly communicate throughout the organization the role and required competencies of principal supervisors
2. Narrow principal supervisor responsibilities and spans of control
3. Strategically select and deploy principal supervisors, matching skills and expertise to the needs of schools.

[14] See Appendix 7 for a graphic depiction of these standards.

4. Provide Principal Supervisors with the professional development and training they need to assume new instructional leadership roles. (Corcoran, A., Casserly, M., Price-Baugh, R., Walston, D., Hall, R., & Simon, C. 2013. p 49)

Some larger urban districts like Denver Public Schools (DPS) have embarked on aggressive reform initiatives to overhaul their central office to operationalize these recommendations. In Denver, the district has dramatically increased its number of principal supervisors, decreased the span of control (ranging from 6 to 20 principals), committed principal "support partners" to help coordinate data analysis and school improvement efforts, and partnered with Relay GSE to build capacity among its supervisors and school leaders (Gill, 2013, p. 20). This theory of action, as Denver Public Schools believes, will provide principals with the support and accountability necessary to effect elusive improvements to the instructional core that have long been out of reach (Gill, 2013).

Given the influence that principals have on teaching and learning within their schools and the complexity of the task involved, principal supervisors can, positively or negatively, influence principal success. Their instructional expertise, their ability to cultivate the spread of effective practice from one school to another, and their duty to provide both support and accountability to networks of principals makes principal supervisors viable catalysts in scaling educational improvement. Defining what this looks like and how this might happen is the focus of this strategic project.

E. Building a System to Scale Positively Deviant Leadership Practice Across A Network of School Systems

There is an opportunity to build an innovative leadership development model that enables positive deviant leadership practices to scale across the educational system

In education, challenges to scale practice from one community to another result from the inherent complexity of teaching and learning across geographically, culturally, politically and economically diverse environments. As Pascale, Sternin and Sternin remind us, the "conventional approach to borrowing best practices and implementing top-down strategies that inspire few and accomplish little" too often ignore the social system that is unique to each community (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010).

Instead, leaders who wish to spread practice must identify core values and explicitly name the essential, non-negotiable activities that are vital to their product. Citing network examples like Green Dot Schools and KIPP Academy, and not-for-profit youth organizations like Jumpstart, City Year, and Citizen Schools, Bradach (1999) suggests that each has embarked on scaling efforts that work to deliver high quality services to a growing number of children across diverse contexts (Bradach, 1999). The most successful of these, he suggests, have been executed by leaders who have built out an explicit theory of change and who clearly have articulated a set of key activities that can be standardized across contexts; "making the knowledge lodged in an operating model explicit is crucial to being able to transfer the model to new locations" (p. 22).

In "Rethinking scale: Moving beyond numbers to deep and lasting change" (2003), Coburn challenges today's school reformers to move beyond setting scaling goals based strictly on the number of constituents served (schools opened, students/participants enrolled, etc.) so as to include depth of implementation, changes in practice, and impact on learning (Coburn, 2003). Specifically, Coburn argues, "scaling up not only requires spread to additional sites, but also consequential change in classrooms, endurance over time, and a shift such that knowledge and authority for the reform is transferred from

external organization to teachers, schools, and districts" (2003, p. 4). Citing four definitions of scaling success, Coburn encourages education leaders to consider four essential dimensions of scaling goals: depth, sustainability, spread, and shift in reform ownership (Coburn, 2003, p. 4).

Taken together, these lessons in scaling provide both a background and a set of guideposts used to shape Relay's efforts to increase its impact on K12 education. In the following section, I outline a specific theory of action that aims to translate these findings into a sustainable program that has the potential to improve schools, classrooms, and most importantly the teaching and learning for students we serve each day.

III. Theory of Action

In order to help districts and charter management organizations fulfill their desire to improve instructional leadership among networks of principals, Relay's theory of action posits:

If principal supervisors:

- see concrete, practical examples of the highest leverage leadership practices (leading data driven instruction, building school culture, conducting observation and feedback, and developing content knowledge) that have been demonstrated to improve student outcomes by the nation's highest performing urban schools,
- are engaged in an intensive, practice-based learning experience that makes these tools, practices, and systems explicit and available to be implemented in a variety of schools, and
- have the opportunity to practice, receive feedback, and improve upon each of these high leverage practices both in training and on the job,

Then:

- principal supervisors will increase the quality and quantity of instructionally focused time they spend with their principals,
- principals will increase the quality and quantity of instructionally focused time they spend with teachers,
- teachers will improve their ability to consistently deliver high impact instruction to a diverse group of learners, and

- students will achieve at higher levels.

In every aspirational theory of action there are multiple "black boxes" inside which some magic must occur in order to achieve the aspirational goals. Here, there is no shortage of black boxes that must be identified and accounted for in order to best mitigate against the fate of most professional training: the practices, as good as they may be, never make their way into schools or they do so in a way that is far removed from the way they were originally conceived. Some of the black boxes that this project explores includes:

- What common practices do today's K12 instructional leaders ***desire*** to know and be able to do in order to help them become more successful in their work? What is the role that they are hiring Relay GSE to fulfill?

- What is an economically ***viable*** way to ensure that Relay is well-poised to achieve its long-term scale and impact goals? How will the organization continue to provide a quality product to its constituents while continuing to grow the number of participants it serves?

- What is **feasible** for Relay to accomplish given its existing organizational capabilities? What new capabilities must it develop in order to achieve our goals?

- What ***impact*** does Relay GSE hope to see that will indicate their work is leading to improved teaching and learning? What will long term success look like, and what formative indicators will we look for to gauge our own improvement efforts? Given how far removed the organization sits from individual students in schools, how will it measure its success?

The answers to these questions will enable the organization to better recognize, design, and execute strategies to mitigate against the challenges it will continue to face as it builds a national program that aims to increase the quality and quantity of instructional leaders serving a diverse set of public schools.

IV. Strategic Project Description and Results

The goal of my strategic project is to design and build out a program that increases principal supervisor capacity to effectively lead networks of principals to become more effective instructional leaders. Relay possesses numerous assets that form a strong foundation on which to build such a program.

As evidenced by the organization's rapid growth, Relay has established itself as a strong provider of instructional leadership training. A five-fold increase in enrollment from 2013 to 2015 suggests that there is both market demand for and participant satisfaction with its signature National Principal Academy Fellowship (NPAF) program. While the organization aspires to serve an increasing number of principals annually, program leaders have prioritized impact (measured by student achievement scores in schools where fellows work) over greater participant numbers for the near term. As such, Relay aims to recruit approximately 350 participants for the 2016-2017 cohort in order to decelerate growth and maintain the organizational capacity to refine systems that will yield stronger impact. Their aim is to build out what has been a nascent principal supervisor program (2 days of voluntary training provided to supervisors of enrolled fellows) into a robust program that meets the learning needs of this important group of system level leaders.

With NPAF, the organization has developed a program design that provides participants with:

- Organized, practical, and well-regarded curriculum, based largely on Bambrick-Santoyo's text, *Leverage Leadership* (2012),
- Consistently effective instruction provided in person, in large and small groups,
- A video-based assessment platform employed by participants throughout fellowship to demonstrate mastery of core instructional leadership competencies.

The organization has developed institutional capacity to design and deliver these components; this includes a nine-member team, on which I serve as an associate dean, composed of the following program leaders

- Dean of Leadership Programs
- Lead Planner of Leadership Programs
- Director of Leadership Curriculum Design
- Director of Operations
- 4 Associate Deans
- Curriculum Designer

Relay maintains a close partnership with Bambrick-Santoyo who works as an active practitioner, content developer, and author keenly interested in improving instructional effectiveness among school and system leaders beyond Uncommon Schools.

Relay's leadership team and Bambrick-Santoyo have become increasingly interested in supporting system level leaders to build skill in practices that will yield improved instructional leadership and student learning in the schools where they are employed. Relay also recognizes that the efficacy of its principal program can be impaired by weak or inconsistent implementation. While principals may depart Relay satisfied, energized, and empowered by the content and approach, their return home brings with it the endless challenges that can hamper sincere efforts to employ what they have learned: day-to-day urgencies that inevitably arise with students and families, building/operation issues, resource management, and conflicting directives from stakeholders often require more managerial bandwidth than may be available.

These challenges tax more than a principal's time; they take a toll on their emotional well-being, as evidenced by the staggering fact that "twenty-five thousand (one quarter of the country's principals) leave their schools each year… (including) fifty percent of new principals who quit during their third year in the role" (School Leaders Network, 2014, p. 2). Recognizing that in addition to the core responsibility of system

level leaders to increase the quality and quantity of future principals in its talent pipeline, it is similarly vital to retain and develop current principals, growing interest has emerged in the role of principal supervisor as a primary support for school leaders. Understanding this role and the corresponding learning needs is fundamental to my strategic project.

Bambrick-Santoyo's continued involvement with NPAF has been integral in helping to refine and build out a body of content and professional development sessions for principal supervisors including videos of principals and principal supervisors working together to actively develop stronger instructional leadership skills, and a practical, detailed, and goal-aligned suite of tools for use by principal supervisors to employ directly in their work with principals. Examples of these tools include

- *Principal Sequence of Action Steps* to support principal coaching
- *Model Calendar* for scheduling and executing effective principal check-ins
- *Principal Check-in Template*
- *Principal Supervisor "One Pagers"* for leading effective feedback meetings with principals[15]

Bambrick-Santoyo and his team continue to develop, review, and revise professional development session plans and model professional development slide decks targeting supervisors of existing NPAF participants.

In serving as an Associate Dean for Relay while simultaneously embedded as an Ed.L.D resident, my core tasks fell into two work streams: A) to build my own content knowledge of Relay GSE and Uncommon School's approach to leadership development and B) to lead a design process that would enable our team to analyze relevant and essential data in order to better define the problem we were attempting to solve with a principal supervisor program, develop a prototype that we could stress test and refine,

[15] See Appendix 9 for sample documents

and prepare for a launch with leaders who would find the program both desirable and impactful.

A. Building Content Knowledge

In order to become more proficient in the content that Uncommon and Relay GSE had identified as "positively deviant practice," I proactively sought opportunities to sharpen my skills as an instructional leader. Following an initial orientation on my first day of residency, I found myself using coaching tools to provide teams of aspiring principals feedback on a mock principal/teacher coaching session. Weeks later, I had the opportunity to join NPAF participants in 12 consecutive days of training where leaders saw, named, and experienced each of Bambrick-Santoyo's "leadership levers." At the end of the first and second week of this summer intensive, leaders have the opportunity to participate in a "triathlon," a four-hour series of live role-plays where leaders demonstrate their ability to lead a highly effective weekly data meeting, coach a teacher using a "six-step" feedback protocol, and plan and roll out a school culture routine that they will use with their faculty once back at their schools. Integral to each of these "events" is feedback: immediately following the role-play, participants receive "high leverage, actionable, and bite-sized feedback (Relay Observation and Feedback Rubric, 2016)" with which they "re-do" a specific moment of their presentation, incorporating the feedback that they received. During these sessions, I had the opportunity to practice each of these skills and apply my own knowledge of the content and tools to provide live, meaningful feedback to participants.

Following the summer session, I took advantage of numerous additional opportunities to continue to hone my practice:

Activity	Frequency	Description
Scoring and providing feedback to advisee assessments	September, October, December, February, April	• Each NPAF participant submits five video-based assessments over the course of the year that demonstrates their ability to plan, execute, and reflect on a particular practice (eg. conducting observations and feedback, leading a weekly data meeting, etc.) • All advisees participate in common training to norm scoring and feedback strategies. • I oversaw 15 advisees whose video assessments I viewed, scored against a rubric, and provided "bite sized, actionable feedback."
Viewing and cataloging video of exemplar principal supervisor practice (Ongoing)	Ongoing	• Uncommon Schools collects regular video footage of principal supervisors engaged in core key activities with principals (leading observation/feedback, discussing data, leading professional development, etc.) • I participated on a working team to analyze collected video, and to identify and catalog segments as exemplars for specific practices • The resulting catalog of effective practice video clips can/will be used as content in upcoming principal supervisor training.
Leading professional development with Principals and Principal Supervisors	October, November, January	• I created session plans, session materials, and facilitated training sessions with Chief Academic Officers from charter/districts across Detroit. • Session focus areas included: Setting Instructional Leadership Goals for Principal Supervisors and Leading More Effective Principal Check-Ins
Coaching principals and principal supervisors through school visits and weekly meetings	Ongoing	• Using Relay GSE tools and practices, I conducted school visits and coached select NPAF principals and principal supervisors to practice leading effective observations and feedback meetings, leading weekly data meetings, and developing improved progress monitoring systems.
Participating in professional development with Leverage Leadership Institute participants and Uncommon Associate Managing Directors	Ongoing	• In order to study the practice of highly effective principal supervisors, I participated in regular professional development sessions with these two groups. • Focus areas included a video review of participants' observation/feedback, data driven instruction, providing real time feedback. • Participants of both groups are selected into these positions based on their demonstrated ability to positively impact student achievement.

The outcome of this professional development helped me to improve my own practice, to develop a deeper understanding of the type of skills that Relay GSE is trying to develop among leaders, and to develop greater empathy for what it means to be a

learner of this content. While a deeper discussion of the implications of this learning for myself and for the site will be discussed in later in this paper, the next section describes how I applied a design thinking process to guide the task of developing a desirable, viable, and feasible principal supervisor program that aimed to have a positive impact on student academic outcomes across a network of schools.

B. Leading a Design Process

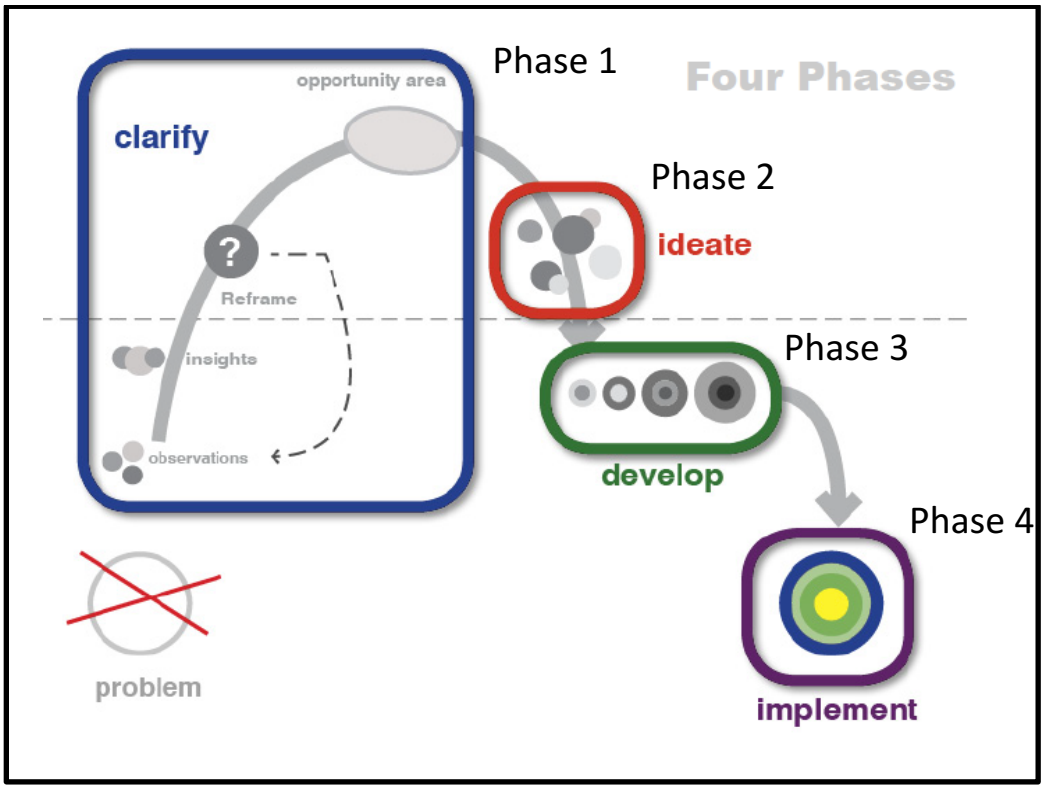
"What is needed in management practice and education today is the development of a design attitude....The decision attitude assumes it is easy to come up with alternatives to consider, but difficult to choose among them. ...The design attitude…is concerned with finding the best answer possible, given the skills, time, and resources of the team, and takes for granted that it will require the invention of new alternatives" Boland, R. J., & Collopy, F. (2004).

Given Relay's assets and its aim to grow the scale and impact of its existing leadership programs, I approached the task of building out the principal supervisor program using a design thinking framework. Design thinking, an approach to innovation used across a wide variety of fields that aims to ground innovations in user experience, seemed to be a promising approach given the inherently complex aspect of developing a diverse set of school and system leaders. The design thinking process requires innovators to resist the temptation to jump to solutions without moving systematically through four stages of design: (1) **clarify** the problem to be solved, (2) **ideate** on numerous potential ways of addressing the problem, (3) **develop** and hone ideas into a coherent design strategy, and (4) **implement**. Using a design thinking framework adopted from IDEO[16] and adapted by professors Srikant Datar and Rajiv Lal at Harvard Business School

[16] For more information about IDEO, please see https://www.ideo.com/

(2014)[17] to organize the program development process, I developed a work plan to ensure that each stage of this process could be executed on a timeline that would allow for a summer 2016 launch. The following diagram illustrates each step of the design process

Figure 5: Design Thinking Framework



(Datar and Lal, 2014).

[17] See Appendix 10 for a full size version of this graphic

The table below describes each phase and the timeline on which they took place.

Phase	Design Thinking Step	Dates	Goal
1. Clarify the Problem to be Solved	1. Identify initial problem	July, 2015	• Articulate the specific problem to solve
	2. Collect initial observational data	July, August, 2015	• Identify, collect, and analyze essential data (qualitative and quantitative) to develop insights to inform initial program design
	3. Develop insights informed by data	September, 2015	• Synthesize data into key insights to inform initial idea generation
	4. Reframe the problem and identify the opportunity for innovation	October, 2015	• Modify, if necessary, the initial problem identification to incorporate new insights gleaned from the data • Articulate, with precision, what opportunity to innovate exists based on the updated problem identification.
2. Ideate	5. Develop new ideas for a new/improved program	October-November, 2015	• Using design principles generated from the insights gleaned from the data, generate a wide range of new ideas that could evolve into more refined concepts
3. Develop	6. Hone ideas into viable concepts	November-December, 2015	• Prioritize one concept from which to refine, validate, and stress test
4. Implement	7. Announce program launch	December, 2015	• Build interest and enthusiasm for the new program.
	8. Build out core components for summer 2016 implementation	December–May, 2016	• Finalize Scope and Sequence • Modify existing content and assessments • Develop new content and assessments • Finalize all program logistics including recruitment and selection

B1. Identify Initial Problem

As stated above, Relay GSE's organizational goals are to ensure that:

1. The teachers and principals we train and develop will have a meaningful impact on K12 students
2. Our graduate students–and undergraduates and other trainees–will have a meaningful experience at Relay GSE.
3. As an institution, we will create meaningful tools and systems to help shape American P-K12 and higher education (Relay GSE Performance Management Guide, 2015).

While early indicators suggested that principals who attended National Principals Academy Fellows program left highly satisfied, having gained meaningful training in the use of practical tools and systems that would help them drive stronger instruction within their schools (suggesting strong results on organizational goals two and three), evidence suggests that schools varied widely in their ability to translate learning while at Relay into improved student performance, measured by state assessments.[18]

Relay GSE leaders felt that in order for these practices to yield measurable impact on K-12 student learning, leaders would need to overcome numerous implementation obstacles in order to ensure that the new learning yielded the intended improved practice (Rector, "Onboarding Communication", July 1, 2015). Evidence gathered from NPAF alumni suggested that, unsurprisingly, competing priorities, initiatives, and motivations often stood in the way between a leader's aspiration to become a more effective instructional leader and their reality (Survey, July 2015). Various solutions to this challenge had been explored previously in the initial design meetings for NPAF, including whether or not "principal coaches" were a viable method of providing participants with the ongoing support and accountability necessary to increase the

[18] See Appendix 11 for an internal report of previous cohort's school performance compared to a comparison group (district or state).

likelihood of implementation (Interview with Rector, Kruse, August 2015). Following early research that examined the long-term sustainability and likely impact of external coaches, Relay leadership team members arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Coaching is typically one of the most expensive lines of a leadership program budget,
2. Effective coaches are hard to find at scale, and
3. In many districts, principals can end up with 3-4 coaches (unintentionally compromising cohesion and alignment) (Interview with Kruse, 2015)

Further, drawing on past experience as former leaders in other high performing school networks, program leaders observed that few of the highest performing urban schools used external coaches for the purpose of driving instructional leadership; instead, they created internal leadership capacity–ensuring that those in positions of leadership had themselves achieved strong student outcomes as teachers and as principals–to provide both expert support and accountability necessary to effectively develop their principals and help them problem solve and prioritize the most challenging aspects of leading a school.

Sensing that principals struggled to sustainably implement many of the core skills, strategies, and systems that they learned while at Relay and recognizing the potential of principal supervisors to both support and hold accountable principals for doing so, I embraced the task of collecting observation data in order to better understand the current strengths and limitations of our existing leadership development program.

B2. Collect Initial Observation Data

Central to the human-centered design process is the notion that new products must be desirable (craved by users), viable (have a business model that ensures long-term solvency), and feasible (there is adequate capacity to deliver). In order to better

understand what constituents found desirable about existing leadership programs, I developed an initial data collection plan that consisted of two primary sources of data: structured interviews with Relay GSE leaders and system-level supporters/constituents who were suggested to have valuable insights to share regarding their experience with NPAF, and NPAF summer session participant survey data. The following table describes each of these data sources in greater detail.

Data Source	Timeline	Description
Structured interviews with executive leaders	July, August 2015	• Over the course of eight weeks, I conducted sixteen structured interviews of stakeholders inside and outside of Relay GSE who could provide perspective on the needs of their principals and the role that they believed principal supervisors could and should play in principal development.[19] • Interviewees included: o Members of Relay GSE's Leadership team o System level leaders in partner organizations o Strategic partners (funders, philanthropists) who have been proponents of this work • Most interviews were conducted in person, some took place via video conference or phone when necessary
Summer Session NPAF Participant Survey Data	August 2015	• Immediately following each two week summer intensive (Denver and New York City), all current NPAF participants (317) completed an electronic survey (as part of the program design) that provided feedback on: o Overall satisfaction and areas for growth o Curriculum strengths and areas for growth o Operations and logistics o Leaders self-assessment of their current efficacy as a leader

[19] See Appendix 12 for structured interview questions

Given how essential the first organizational goal ("*The teachers and principals we train and develop will have a meaningful impact on K12 students*") is to Relay's identity and the brand that school partners hire to help them achieve, I also worked to develop a plan to help the organization assess the impact of Relay GSE's young, but growing NPAF program. While Relay GSE leaders remain committed to maintaining student performance on state-administered annual tests as the preferred metric to track program impact, doing so with a young program, with a growing, but still relatively small number of principals who have been hand selected by their districts to participate in the program, amidst a rapidly changing testing and accountability environment, makes an impact study a challenging and long-term endeavor.

Beyond annual student achievement test scores, I sought to examine formative evidence of impact that would enable me to better understand what changes in behavior or practice NPAF training was eliciting on participant practice once they had returned to their schools. In doing so, I initially analyzed three data sources which are summarized in the following table.

Data Source[20]	Timeline	Description
Alumni Survey Data	October, 2015	• An implementation survey that asks previous year participants to describe the state of implementation, identify specific successes, challenges, and overall satisfaction with the program. • Collected from the two prior year's (2014 and 2015) cohorts • 192 respondents, an 80% response rate
Current Participant Implementation Survey Data #1	October 2015	• In preparation for October Intersession, all NPAF participants complete an instructional survey that provides self-reported feedback on the successes, challenges, and overall satisfaction while currently implementing practices learned in NPAF. • 249 respondents, a 78% response rate
Assessment Data Report for Implementation of Observation and Feedback[21]	October 2015	• As part of the NPAF assessment program, all NPAF participants are required to submit video and written artifacts of them leading an observation and feedback meeting with a teacher. This video is scored by Relay GSE advisors, each of whom have demonstrated a level of proficiency in each of the instructional levers and who receive common training and scoring tools to assess, score, and provide qualitative feedback to each participant. The results of this assessment are compiled into a cohort report that describes overarching trends in participant skill in conducting effective observation and feedback meetings. • 307 participants, 97% response rate

[20] Note: These data sources have been developed and integrated into Relay's programs by the Relay Research Leadership Programs teams.

[21] See appendix 13 for an example of the rubric and feedback that participants are provided.

Given that the purpose of this round of data collection was to develop insights that could inform a design process, I reviewed the data generated by each of these sources for the purpose of establishing themes around three key questions: What does this data tell us about what principals and their supervisors crave? Is there a difference between what they crave and what we believe they need? What does the data tell us about the level of impact (changes in leader behavior or practice) that our current program was encouraging?

B3. Develop Insights Informed by Data

Following the initial round of structured interviews, I analyzed responses to establish trends that emerged across constituents who had experienced the existing NPAF program as a participant, as supervisor of a participant, or both. From this group of stakeholders, there was overwhelming enthusiasm for both the content and delivery of the existing program. Specifically, respondents reported that the following aspects of the existing NPAF program were especially strong and highly desirable:

Content	Delivery
• Current content provides leaders with a common, precise language regarding what high leverage instructional practice should look like • The existing suite of tools and protocols are instrumental to helping "shape the path" for strong implementation of effective instructional leadership	• Consistently exceptional facilitation • Limited, but powerful opportunities for principal supervisors to work closely with principals • Limited, but effective breakout sessions allow participants the opportunity to practice, plan, and learn with role-alike peers

Content	Delivery
• The existing use of video/practice is both powerful and a unique differentiator between this program and other leadership models. • Insisting that "measuring what matters" helps leaders develop integrated goals and drivers ensuring that they strengthen their discipline of evidence driven improvement.	• Appreciate learning from highly effective leaders who have walked the talk (i.e., have led or currently lead high achieving schools) • Enjoy being part of a selective peer group that is driven to refine/improve their instructional leadership skills

A striking theme that emerged from these conversations was the role that NPAF played in helping leaders develop a common, unified, and coherent vision of what effective teaching and learning looks like and a language with which to describe it. This theme is exemplified in the following participant responses.

> *"NPAF gave us a common handbook, language, and common tools to help our principals and supervisors talk about what we saw in the classroom."*
> *– Interview, Instructional Superintendent, District Public School, 2015*

> *"We have a much clearer definition of what it means to do 'data driven instruction' or what the purpose behind conducting observations and feedback is. We desperately needed to get on the same page and this helped us get crystal clear about what this is supposed to look like."*
> *- Interview, Instructional Superintendent, District Public School, 2015*

Similar support for the existing program was echoed by participants in their 2016 Summer Intensive Survey feedback: more than 96% of participants responded that "they would recommend this program to a colleague" (NYC Summer Intensive Survey Data Results, email summary, 2015). Themes that emerge from their qualitative feedback suggest that practice, feedback, and focused time to improve their instructional leadership practice were the most valuable parts of their participation in NPAF (Summer Intensive Data Report, 2015). Comments that were emblematic of the group feedback included:

"The greatest strengths (of NPAF Summer Session) was the cycle of presentation of information, planning for application, practice of implementation, feedback, and refined practice of implementation."

"The immediate feedback on practice during the triathlons was most helpful. It allowed me to practice and get feedback from individuals who had/are doing the work and who are experienced." (NYC NPAF Participants 2015 Summer Session Survey)

Beyond these specific statements of support for the program, the following trends emerged that spoke to the impact that NPAF may be having on leaders and their schools:

- More than 85% of NPAF Alumni "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their participation had prepared them to:
    - Understand and recognize effective instruction
    - Conduct classroom observations and support teacher development
    - Provide actionable feedback based on data
    - Coach teachers on data driven instruction
    - Cultivate a strong school climate centered on student learning (NPAF Alumni Survey, 2015)

- Current participants reported that following their summer intersession work they were better prepared to lead more effective summer professional development with teachers, initiate stronger school culture routines in the first weeks of school, and implement more robust observation and feedback meetings with teachers (Fall Instructional Survey, 2015).

Further, a few key statements from system level leaders seemed to indicate that Relay's aspiration to positively impact the sector beyond a handful of charter schools was coming to fruition and that principal supervisors played a role.

"Our participation (in NPAF) has facilitated a district shift towards more intentional and manageable caseloads for principal supervisors to ensure that they can prioritize implementation and provide high quality feedback and support to principals…Requiring principal supervisors to participate fully separates the wheat from the chaff–those who don't adhere to protocol, show up on time, do the practice, aren't doing it on the ground. (Interview, Chief of Schools, District Public School, 2015)

This respondent highlights the changing expectations for principal supervisors; they must be prepared to lead by example: learning, practicing, and implementing the same

practices that they are now expecting of their principals. This perspective is expanded upon by an instructional superintendent and past NAPF participant who states "principal supervisors who have attended NPAF are now having conversations about classroom practice–they know that this is the work" (Interview, Instructional Superintendent, 2015).

Themes that emerged from this data indicate that many elements of the existing design–the coherent, high quality, and practical content, tools, and focus on practice, coupled with high quality facilitation, and limited, but important opportunities for principals and principal supervisors to practice building skills together and apart–seemed to be key components that should remain in future iterations of the program design.

When probed, however, both interviewees and respondents suggested that common challenges emerged when participants returned to their schools to implement the practices that they had learned. These "pain points" fell into three thematic buckets:

Content - *What additional content do leaders feel they need beyond what they currently experience in NPAF*	**Implementation** - *What are the common challenges leaders faced when attempting to implement NPAF practice*	**Leader Self Efficacy** - *How do leaders feel about their role as a leader at this stage of their development?*
• How do I get additional expert feedback on my practice once at home? • Beyond Relay's existing content, what additional practices must I excel at in order to transform my school? (e.g. Strategic planning, change management, applying these practices to different populations of students)	• What does the elusive "third way" look like in a school like mine? • How do I integrate this into other, competing district initiatives? • How do I create systems to implement these practices in contexts like mine? • How do I motivate others to want to implement this work? • How do I hold myself/team accountable for long-term implementation? • Where do I start in my context?	• How do I better maintain control over my schedule? • How do I better cope with stress from the job? • How do I better prioritize competing demands? • How do I better handle the job demands? • How do I sustain this work?

These pain points suggest that, despite the high-quality experience, tools, and learning that participants received while they were with Relay GSE, participants face extensive and complex challenges when they return home. Some struggle with the content, others

with supervision, others still with managing themselves. My next area of focus was to figure out how to translate these insights into an improved program design.

B4. Reframe Problem and Identify Opportunity for Innovation

The insights gleaned from these initial observations led me to have a refined understanding of the problem that we were trying to solve with the development of a program for principal supervisors. Drawing on Clayton Christensen's (2013) hallmark "job to be done" framework,[22] asserting that customers in any sector ultimately "hire" products (or experiences in this case) to get a specific set of jobs accomplished, I hypothesized, from these observations, that Relay's current NPAF customers (both the system leaders and the individual leaders that participate in the program) "hire" Relay GSE to help them get six important jobs done:

1. Develop a common, coherent and aligned vision of what highly effective instructional leadership looks like.
2. Provide them with practical, high quality tools and protocols that they can immediately use to improve instructional leadership practice with the leaders and teachers in their schools
3. Improve their own instructional leadership practice
4. Feel special, part of a select group
5. Problem solve the numerous and complex context specific challenges that are inherent in leading schools
6. Improve measurable academic student outcomes for the students that they serve.

The initial problem statement broadly asked how best to support principals to improve implementation of core Relay practices. However, the insights generated from these data points and synthesized into six "jobs to be done" suggested that while principals found the existing program successful in helping them achieve the first four of these jobs, they struggled to problem solve the numerous and complex context specific challenges that are

inherent in leading schools and struggled to spread practices to a sufficient number of adults in their buildings necessary to achieve measurable gains in student learning.

B5. Develop New Ideas for A New/Improved Program

Given the organization's interest in improving its existing NPAF program and its eagerness to launch a pilot principal supervisor program in 2016 (that we believed would better support the next cohort of principals) and consequentially, the rapidly approaching timeline for numerous strategic, interacting decisions our team needed to make (recruitment and selection deadlines, setting and messaging projected costs to participants, logistic deadlines, etc.), I fast-tracked the idea generation phase in order to translate these design principles into a vision for a "minimal viable program" that I could present to various constituents (internal team members and select prospective partners) for feedback and refinement. Drawing on the insights gleaned from the data, the Dean of the Leadership Program and I generated ideas for each of the design principles that would eventually inform a cohesive draft vision for the program. Following the previous described "jobs to be done," I crafted design principles that would enable us to articulate one or two program features that would best fit our partners' needs.

Design Principles for New Principal Supervisor Program

Create common, coherent and aligned vision between principal managers and principals	• Ensure that principal managers have the same depth of training with Leverage Leadership competencies as their principals • Build principal managers' and principals' skill using common tools
Increase the number of tools/protocols available to principal managers and principals	• Increase access to all materials, assessments and protocols via the course platform (from principals only to principal supervisors) • Develop new content to fill existing gaps identified by principals and principal supervisors
Help both principal managers and principals improve their own practice and recognize effective practice in others	• Increase session practice time for principal supervisors • Include principal supervisors in all follow up assessment/ feedback over the course of the year to ensure that they are practicing/ building skill
Ensure that participants feel part of a selective group	• Increase selectivity to include certain readiness indicators • Reserve time with experts to those enrolled in the new program • Reserve Course platform/ Assessments/ follow up for those in program
Deepen long- term problem solving capacity between principal managers and principals	• Principal managers and principals work together as much as possible • Build principal manager up as a lead learner and teacher • Build in time for collaborative consultancy, planning, and problem solving
Maintain focus on how to measurably improve learning for students	• Prioritize NPAF seats to principal manager and principal teams who will train and implement together • Tighten accountability mechanisms for stronger implementation (tracking tools, calendars, assessments)

Following a series of planning meetings I led, I helped our team refine our theory of action to explicitly articulate what we believed to be true about our work:

- Like great teachers, **highly effective principals are not born…they are made**. In order to increase the quality and quantity of highly effective principals serving in our nation's highest needs schools, we must find a desirable, impactful, and viable way to better develop new and existing principals.

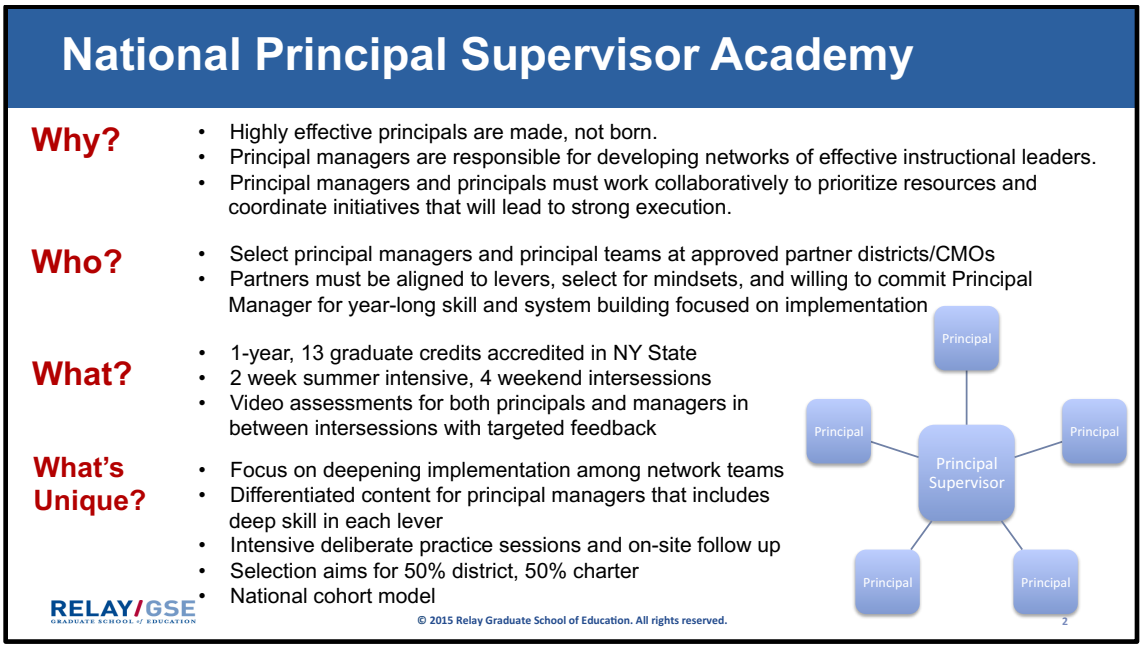
- In many of the highest performing networks, **principal supervisors provide principals with the accountability, professional learning, and support** required to accelerate their development into highly effective instructional leaders and deepen implementation of effective instructional leadership practice.

- Given the diverse range of experience and expertise of principal supervisors nationally, Relay GSE has an opportunity to further strengthen the capacity of sitting principals by **investing in the development of both them and their supervisors**.

- If we build a principal supervisor training program that **provides principal supervisors and principal teams with an *effective* and *aligned* set of high leverage instructional leadership skills and systems** and afford them the opportunity to learn, practice, and problem solve together within their context, principals will experience the professional learning and accountability necessary for accelerated development and sustained implementation of improved practice.

In order to turn this theory of action into a concrete program design we could test and iterate with others, we generated the following "one pager" that describes the essential elements of a newly integrated NPAF+ program:

Figure 6: NPSA One Pager



(Klompus, Draft Program Description, October 2015)

Given the many directions that our program could have taken (such as a virtual learning model for principal supervisors, an abbreviated in-person program, such as is common in other organizations, etc.), I suggested that the leadership program would be best positioned to achieve the scale (in terms of depth, sustainability, spread, and a shift in reform ownership, as described by Coburn above) if both principals and principal supervisors attended together in "nested teams." This model, where principal supervisors and principals could both engage in intensive learning together and problem solve the challenges unique to their contexts, seemed like a particularly interesting feature of this program. Additionally, we knew that beyond a core set of common skills that we believed principals and their supervisors needed to build together, principal supervisors would require an additional set of differentiated content that would help them apply this learning to their context as manager of a network of principals. While the proposed model received strong support from thought partners in and outside of Relay GSE, I suggested

that in order to further refine the concept and further define additional program details, we would do well to name and test the dominant assumptions that were integral to our proposed model.

While drawing largely on our team's observations of past participant experience and our own observations of "positively deviant" principal supervisors from a small group of high performing schools, we had to remain cognizant that we were seeking to apply a specific set of practices to leaders from different school types, geographies, and with different skill levels and sets of experiences. The assumption that this plan was both possible, and desirable to a diverse group of principals needed to be tested and iterated upon in the next phase of the design process.

As part of this process, I helped our team articulate the assumptions that seemed to underlie the direction of our early visions of a program design. Specific assumptions that we named were that:

1. Some core instructional leadership practices are spreadable across contexts (from high performing charters to lower performing charter and district schools)

2) Principal supervisors play a role in supporting, holding accountable, and creating the conditions for increased professional learning for their principals and

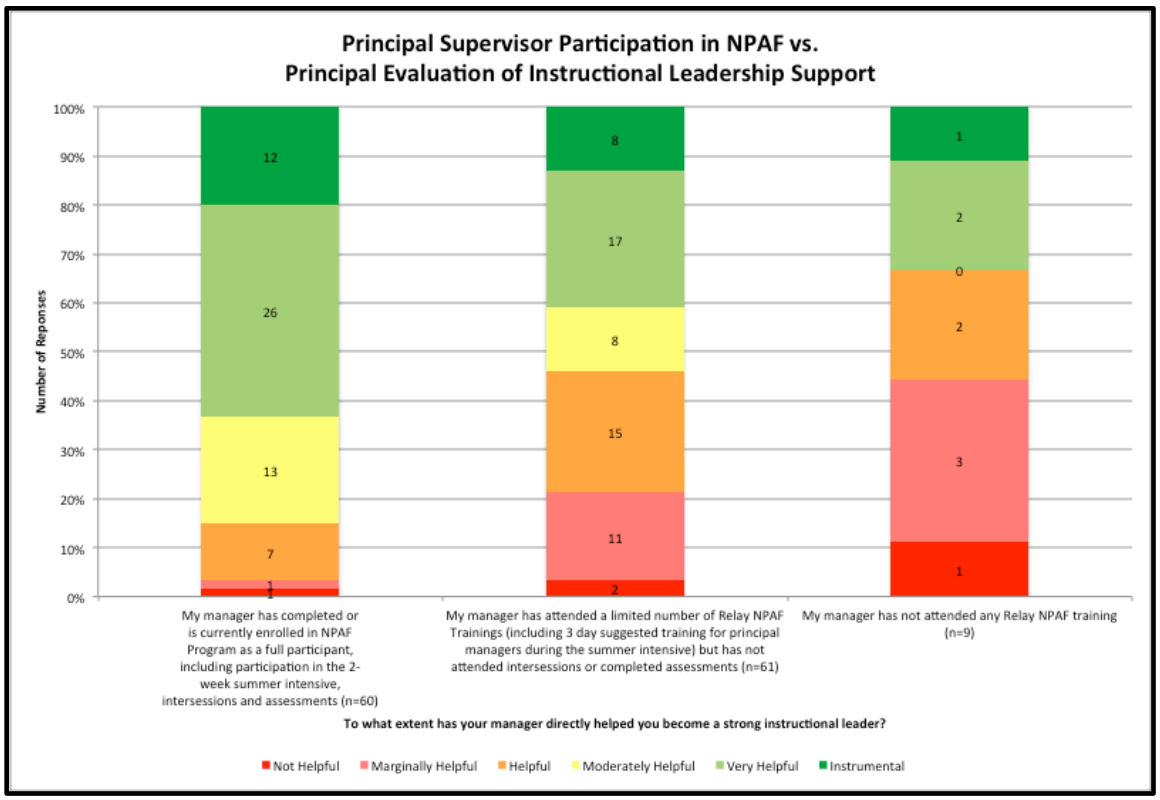
3) Principal supervisors who attend the full year of NPAF (either previously as principal participants or enrolled as individuals, not teams as we are proposing) are more likely to create high degrees of accountability, professional learning, and support necessary to develop their principals than those who had received less training.

In order to better understand the experience of the principals that we served and the extent to which they shared our hypothesis that their supervisors could play a pivotal role in their efforts to implement and ultimately deepen the practices they were learning

while engaged in Relay GSE, I surveyed 151 current NPAF principals who represented a diverse cross section of school types, experience, and performance levels and shared the subsequent findings with our team.

Recognizing that among our sample we had a group whose supervisors had gone through the entire NPAF program (as prior or current participants), a group who had only attended a mandatory 3 day training during the summer intensive, and a small group of others who had not attended NAPF at all, I realized that we had a unique opportunity to stress-test our assumption that principal managers who had received more NPAF training would be better positioned to support their principals to become stronger instructional leaders. The chart below describes principal responses to the question: *to what extent has your manager directly helped you become a strong instructional leader?*

Figure 7: Principal Supervisor Participation vs. Instructional Leadership Support

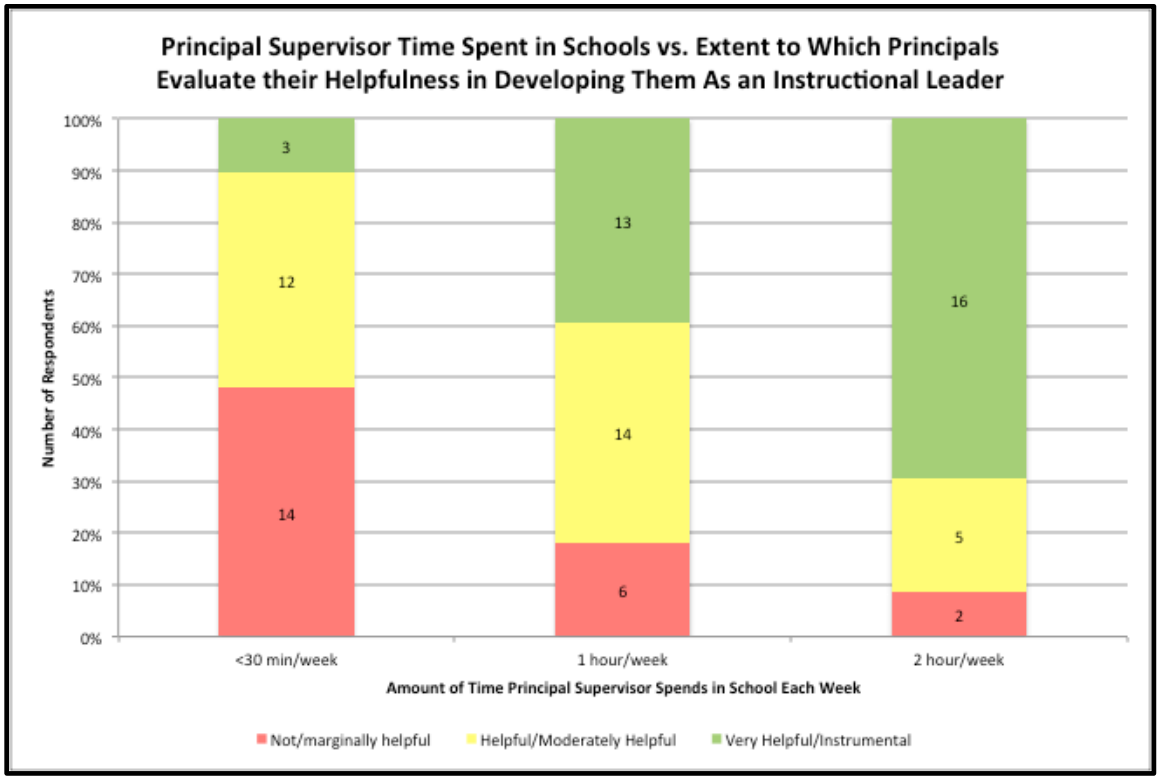


The evidence summarized above suggests that principals whose supervisors had completed or are currently enrolled in the full program find their supervisors to be more helpful in helping them develop as strong instructional leaders. While selection bias is certainly embedded in these results (principal supervisors who are stronger may self-select to become full participants in the program), it is still particularly striking that based on the data, 63% of principals whose supervisors had actually attended the full NPAF program find their supervisors to be very helpful or instrumental in helping them develop as instructional leaders compared to 40% of their peers whose supervisors attended the three day training only. While additional data collection is necessary to better understand how these trends compare to principals whose supervisors have not attended any NPAF training as our sample included only 9 of 151 participants whose supervisors had no

training/exposure to NPAF, these findings help us bolster our assumptions that principal participants find supervisors who have received similar training and skill development helpful in their efforts to become stronger instructional leaders.

A second question we wished to explore is whether or not an association exists between the amount of time principals' supervisors spend in schools and the extent to which principals find their supervisors helpful in developing them as instructional leaders. This question is of particular interest as NPAF's current content strongly encourages principal supervisors to work alongside principals inside their schools for two hours per week during which they engage in co-observations and feedback, data check-ins, and school culture walk-throughs. These sessions are the heart of the "principal check-in," a regular, weekly meeting that principals and supervisors commit to planning for and utilizing the highest leverage school improvement initiatives. While this practice has been borne out in "positively deviant" school networks such as Uncommon Schools, the extent to which this practice took place once participants were at home in their schools and was helpful to principals remained unknown. In an effort to understand this association, we asked principals to identify the amount of time their supervisors spend in their school and the extent to which they find their supervisors helpful in developing them as strong instructional leaders. The chart below illustrates these findings.

Figure 8: Principal Supervisor Time Spent in Schools vs. Perceived Helpfulness



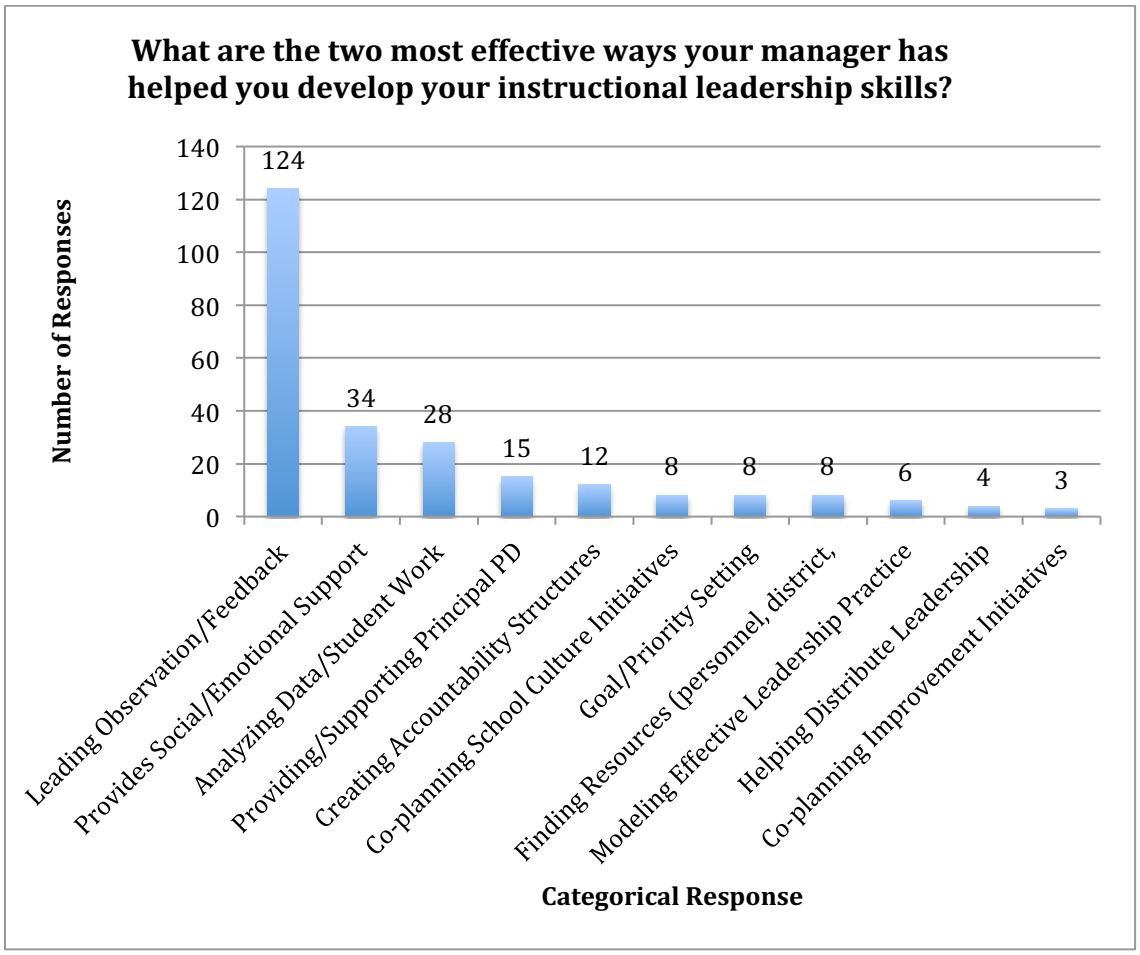
These responses suggest that principal supervisors who attempt to lead from afar, spending less than 30 minutes per week in a principal's school are seven times more likely to be found not helpful or marginally helpful by their principals. Conversely, principal supervisors who spend significant time in school each week are more than five times more likely to be viewed as very helpful or instrumental to principals who are working to develop as instructional leaders. These findings confirm our initial assumptions that this particular practice–meeting regularly with principals in their schools–is a practice that may be valued by a diverse group of principals.

In order to gain an even better understanding as to what specifically these principals find most effective in helping develop their instructional leadership skills, we asked respondents to describe the two most effective ways that their managers have

helped them develop their instructional leadership skills and what they wish their supervisors would do.

The overwhelming response to both of these questions was "provide me feedback." Like musicians, surgeons, and other performance professionals, principals found supervisor-led feedback on core aspects of their practice particularly supportive of their development as instructional leaders. The chart below describes and categorizes their responses.

Figure 9: Effective development of principals by their managers



While principals overwhelmingly desire on-the-job feedback from their supervisors– regularly and actively engage in leading observations and giving "feedback on their feedback" unsurprisingly, they also find "softer" leadership behaviors valuable in helping them develop their instructional leadership skills. Comments described in the table below were indicative of those included in the "provides social and emotional support" categories:

Provides Social and Emotional Support	
• Provides support/encouragement • Provides mentorship • Communicates effectively with me • Makes herself available whenever I need her • Is an active listener and thought partner • Helps solve urgent problems	• Encourages risk taking • Builds relationships with staff and families • Provides me autonomy • Gives advice/provides insight in complex situations • Pushes me to continuously improve

Beyond the pervasive request from principals for increased feedback on their practice, principals also asked for more dedicated time to meet with their supervisors at school to improve their implementation of the leadership levers, greater proficiency by supervisors in each of the leadership levers and core content, and greater support for prioritizing/goal setting in order to focus "my time on the things that matter most" (Response from Instructional Survey, 2015). Interestingly, across both of these categories, there were not significant differences between charter and district school principals.

Taken together, the data collected from this survey instrument provided relevant and nuanced insights to help our team test our early assumptions about what role principal supervisors may play in helping develop stronger instructional leaders as well as help inform our understanding of what principals desire from their supervisors.

Additionally, by drawing on these trends I was able integrate these findings into a framework for us to assess the differentiated content that principal supervisors may need to support principals to improve their instructional leadership skills.

B6. Hone Ideas into Viable Concepts

The success of my strategic project would be determined by my ability to lead my team to efficiently and effectively translate the insights generated in the previous phases of the design process into a desirable, viable, and feasible program that would enable Relay and the leaders it serves to increase the scale and impact of their existing leadership program. The table below describes the goals by which we would determine the success of the project:

	Core Questions to Answer	**Success indicators**
Desirability	Is this a program that system level leaders are going to want to attend/send instructional leaders to?	• 30% of 2016 Cohort will enroll as nested teams • ≥65% of program participants will be "net promoters" (indicating that they agree/strongly agree with targeted satisfaction questions)*
Feasibility	Do we have sufficient internal capacity to deliver the services we have promised?	• The following needs will be met by predetermined deadlines: o Staffing/Faculty o Scope and Sequence o Content Development and Revision o Operational Logistics
Viability	Is the model economically sustainable?	• 100% of program costs will be covered by earned income
Impact	Will our participant's investment in Relay yield increased implementation and impact on learning?	• Improved instructional leadership skills • Improved implementation at home • Improved student growth and achievement *

*Indicates Long-Term (1-2 year) Success Indicator Following Program Completion

While I felt confident that we were on track to develop a program that would be desirable, feasible, and viable, I remained concerned that it still would not yield the intended impact on student learning. The observations, interviews, and survey data all suggested that participants experienced a steep learning curve over the course of the year that was both hard to translate into their own context and difficult to sustain without stronger, more personalized support than we had yet been able to provide.

In order to push our team to think beyond replicating the existing program for principal supervisors, I synthesized the findings from the data and from the research for this project and developed a framework that we might use to appreciate the multi-dimensional learning our participants would experience which, unless designed towards, would compromise our impact goals.

I hypothesized that our leaders experienced four related, but discrete, phases of learning:

Phase	Goal	Short and Long Term Implications for Relay
Phase 1: Improve my practice	Increase baseline proficiency with the positively deviant tools, systems, and practice	Increase the suite of tools/strategies to • Improve new participant "readiness" to implement PD practice (e.g. create self assessments, mini-modules/facilitated sessions) • Align all existing content to phases of teacher/principal development to increase sophistication/complexity • Adapt current scope and sequence to ensure supervisors have an opportunity to practice principal-level practice (data-driven instruction, observation and feedback, leading student and staff culture, leading PD, academic content and pedagogy) • Adopt/develop stronger progress monitoring tools to "shape the path" for participants to consistently enact the most important practices in their school sites

Phase 2: Lead others to improve their practice	Increase ability to design and execute ongoing opportunities for others to learn and practice positively deviant skills	Refine existing and develop new modules to ensure that supervisors can effectively: • Provide principals feedback on their feedback • Lead network principal professional development based on trends observed across the network • Lead working groups to identify positive deviant practice within the system • Lead school inspections to provide ongoing practice and feedback to schools across their network
Phase 3: Collaboratively plan and problem solve implementation at my site	Increase ability to collaboratively problem solve the complex implementation challenges of system-level improvement	Increase the time and support provided for system-alike and role-alike teams to collaboratively engage in: • Strategic Planning • Context specific implementation challenges • Collaborative problem solving • Team building
Phase 4: Sustain the work for myself and others	Increase ability to sustain the work that enables it to thrive beyond their tenure.	Increase the time and suite of tools available to leaders to: • Identify change management challenges and solutions • Identify, recruit, and retain top talent • Manage their own and other's time • Distribute leadership

Using this framework, our team assessed the existing program and realized that while much of our existing program emphasized building skill in phases 1 and 2, we struggled to prioritize and lead our participants in phases 3 and 4. Over the course of multiple design meetings, we worked to achieve consensus on the right sequence, prioritization, and our capacity to effect meaningful learning with the time, team, and resources we had in place. By February, 2016, we had developed a scope and sequence that would ultimately reflect what we collectively believed was essential content to prioritize for our participants during the program and agreed that we needed to build out a

more robust strategy to support those alumni who had built some skills while in the program but struggled to implement many of the skills and systems in their context.

For the 2016-17 cohort of principal supervisors, participants would engage in learning at two altitudes: at the school level and at the system level. Specifically, participants could expect to develop the following competencies.

	Instructional Leadership	Cultural Leadership	Strategic Leadership
Principal Supervisor	• Lead Principal PD • Lead Principals to Use Data to Drive Instruction in Schools • Lead Observation and Feedback of Principals	• Lead Principal Teams • Develop Positive principal culture • Assess and improve school culture across schools	• Assessing System Readiness • Developing System Goals and Drivers • Implement Aligned Monthly Map and Weekly Calendar
Principal	• Lead Faculty PD • Lead Faculty to Use Data to Drive Instruction in Classrooms • Lead Observation and Feedback of Faculty	• Lead Faculty Teams • Develop positive staff culture • Assess and improve student culture within schools	• Assess School Readiness • Develop School Goals and Drivers • Implement aligned monthly map and weekly calendar

Building on the extensive and high quality work of Bambrick-Santoyo, our team worked together to design a scope and sequence that would enable principal supervisors to engage in work at the school (principal) level for approximately 50% of the time while enabling supervisors to apply these skills to their role at the system level for the remaining 50% of the time.[23] In addition to building competencies in these systems and tools, participants would spend an increased amount of time together as teams, working together to anticipate implementation challenges, collaboratively plan to problem solve

[23] See Appendix 13 for the proposed scope and sequence

these challenges, and take time to plan strategically for sustaining themselves and those around them.

B7. Launch National Principal Supervisor's Academy and Build Out Core Components

In December of 2015, we announced the launch of the newly designed program and began the recruitment and selection process. Key components of this launch included:

- The design and dissemination of the 2016-17 program offerings (including description, dates, costs, and application process)
- The development of a New Partner Readiness Assessment that would help partner organizations better assess their organization's current alignment and readiness to implement the most foundational aspects of the leadership program[24]
- The development of a Partner Selection Toolkit that would enable partners to conduct a robust participation selection process (ensuring that only participants with high will) were prioritized
- The development of a participant self-assessment to enable individual participants (both supervisors and principals) to assess the current state of implementation of Leverage Leadership practices[25]
- Scheduling new partner interviews with executive leaders to determine program fit

As of April 2016, current indicators reflect progress towards the strategic project goals as summarized in the following table.

[24] See Appendix 14 for Readiness Assessment
[25] See Appendix 15 for Participant Self Assessment

	Core Questions to Answer	Success indicators	Progress as of April 2016
Desirability	Is this a program that system level leaders are going to want to attend/send instructional leaders to?	• 30% of 2016 Cohort will enroll as nested teams • ≥85% of program participants will be "net promoters" (indicating that they agree/strongly agree with targeted satisfaction questions)	• 405 applicants for 350 seats • 104 Principal Supervisors Enrolled • # nested teams TBD
Feasibility	Do we have sufficient internal capacity to deliver the services we have promised?	• Have the following needs been met by predetermined deadlines: o Staffing/Faculty o Scope and Sequence o Content Development and Revision o Operational Logistics	• All Staffing/Faculty Identified • Scope and Sequence has been developed • Core content is on track to meet printing deadline (May 1) • Operational logistics are on track and ahead of this time last year.
Viability	Is the model economically sustainable?	• 100% of program costs will be covered by earned income	• Current projections indicate that 100% of program costs will be covered by earned income.
Impact	Will our participant's investment in Relay yield increased implementation and impact on learning?	• Improved Instructional Leadership Skills • Improved Implementation at school-site • Improved Student Growth and Achievement	• Design in place to monitor pre/post skill development (from video assessments) • Planning underway to collect implementation data (observation and feedback and Weekly Data Meeting) • Planning underway to strategically increase "on the ground support" for targeted regions

While current evidence suggests that this strategic project is on track to provide incoming participants with desirable, relevant, and intensive learning within a program that is viable and feasible to execute, it remains likely that some participants will encounter difficulty in their attempts to implement all of the practices they have learned once they return back to their schools and systems at a level necessary to evoke demonstrable improvements in teaching and learning. In the following section, I hope to analyze the tentative results of this project in an effort to identify useful implications for Relay, the sector generally, and for myself as a leader.

V. Analysis

The aim of this strategic project was to develop an innovative program for principal supervisors that would increase their capacity to support principals to improve as instructional leaders. Given the dearth of professional training opportunities for this group of leaders, we felt urgency to expedite the launch of a real program - with real professionals, paying real money to help them get better at leading instruction for real students. In doing so, the stakes were high to efficiently and effectively develop a desirable, viable, and feasible product that, though certainly not perfect, would enable our team to be on the cutting edge of training principal supervisors while translating early lessons into an improved program for future years.

As described above, early indicators suggest the program that has been planned, pitched, and will be filled by nested teams of system and school leaders will be well received. It has been built as integrated component of an existing and well regarded program (National Principal Academy Fellows Program), leverages well-recognized and

high quality content (borne out of positively deviant practices at Uncommon Schools), and will be executed by a high quality team with a demonstrated track record of leading schools towards improved academic outcomes. It will be populated by participants who are generally aligned to our vision for what successful schools look like and who have been selected as leaders from their organizations for demonstrating that they have the will, and the potential to lead their schools towards improved outcomes.

As a leader who is in the precarious position of being both an Associate Dean responsible for the successful design and execution of a strategic project and as an outside observer looking into the organization, I have the daunting responsibility to leverage my findings from this project into an opportunity for the organization to hold a mirror up to itself in an effort to critically analyze the strengths and shortcomings of the program it, and I, have designed. As such, I offer the following headline analyses:

1. **What we have planned may be necessary but not sufficient to achieve the goals that we have set;**
2. **There is a gap between what needs to be done and what we currently have the organizational capabilities to accomplish;**
3. **Artifacts of our past success may impede our future progress.**

1. What we have planned may be necessary but not sufficient to achieve the goals that we have set:

Despite the strengths of our content, our team, and our approach, evidence suggests that what we have planned may be necessary but not sufficient to achieve the goals we have identified as most important. At each stage of the data collection process, numerous indicators suggested that participants face challenges in implementing this work in their contexts and lack the ongoing support necessary to problem solve what deep implementation might look like in their context. Juxtaposing the pain points that principals report they encounter alongside the learning experiences we provide, I worry

there may be 1) too many black boxes in our theory of action, (i.e., what can go wrong, likely will) 2) the anticipated challenges leaders face when attempting to implement this work require skills beyond those we currently know how to help them develop 3) we may have underestimated the role of the "social system" that may be integral to successful spread of effective practice. As described previously, our theory of action suggests that

If we:

- Build a principal supervisor training program that provides principal supervisors and principal teams with an *effective* and *aligned* set of high leverage instructional leadership skills and systems and
- Afford them the opportunity to learn, practice, and problem solve together within their context,

Then:

- Principals will experience the professional learning and accountability necessary for accelerated development and sustained implementation of improved practice.

In other words, this theory of action implies that sustained implementation and the improved practice of the instructional leaders will yield improvements to teacher effectiveness which in turn will yield measurable improvements to student learning.

Between the lines of this theory of action, there are an immense set of assumptions, decisions, and priorities that leaders must make in order for the intervention (i.e. professional development) to yield the intended impact (improvement in student learning). Enrolled participants (both principals and principal supervisors) must believe that what they have learned is valuable and worth implementing. They must be motivated to become expert in these practices themselves which means that they must engage in the practice back in their schools amidst competing pressures to do otherwise. They must be motivated to teach these practices to others and must possess the content, skill, and relational collateral to curate this learning for the adults they serve. They must become skilled in predicting implementation challenges and possess the prioritization, problem

solving, and relational skills to lead others through the organizational change required to implement "effective" practices with integrity. What these moves look like for a district instructional superintendent within a deeply politicized, union environment in Tulsa will differ from what it looks like for a high performing charter school leader in Newark.

In "Learning to Improve" Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, and LeMahieu describe these black boxes as the Achilles heel of systemic improvement and suggests that leaders aim for *adaptive integration* as a means by which to achieve sustained change.

> "Improvement research focuses on learning how to make things work in a variety of different organizational conditions. This may entail some adaptations to the intervention itself, and it may also require addressing some site-specific problems, necessary to solve, for the intervention to be integrated well…Failing to appreciate fully the significance of context has often led good reform ideas to fail (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, LeMahieu, 2015, p. 80)."

In order for our leaders to engage in this work, they will be required to exercise additional skills beyond those that they acquire at Relay. Specifically, Bryk et al. suggest that they engage in the four following questions:

- "Are local actors engaging in external research evidence in ways that might actually accomplish improvements?
- Are they remaining true to the research-based design principles as they construct modifications to the initial intervention?
- Are they learning from their initial efforts how to get better?
- Are they engaging in their own local improvement research, and are they sharing data and learning from other sites engaging in this same improvement journey?" (Bryk, 2016).

In electing to attend Relay, it could be argued that participants are proactively engaging in external research evidence to accomplish the improvements to which they aspire. Throughout and beyond their year at Relay however, participants have limited

opportunities to ask and answer the remaining questions that follow. What does being true to the design principles mean? How will they measure it in their context? What do the results tell us? How are we doing compared to other leaders who are attempting to implement the same practices?

By surfacing these questions, there is a marked shift in who is the expert–from the author of the content or the deliverer of the PD–to the participants, who, while working with each other, must leverage their know-how to create the time, tools, and talent to pursue these answers. Making this shift may require Relay to ask itself how well it sets leaders up to do this, how well it knows how to do this, and where in its suite of offerings it plans to do this.

2. There is a gap between what needs to be done and what we currently have the organizational capabilities to accomplish.

Much of Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's work suggests that our values are defined by our actions and one of the most important "aha's" that our participants experience takes place during a session when they determine the number of minutes each week they spend closely observing what is taking place in classrooms vs. doing the other work of running a school. Recognizing that, on average, principals generally spend less than 6% of their time focused on day-to-day instruction, Bambrick-Santoyo recommends that principals align their goals, drivers, and calendars to enable them to spend roughly 60% of their time focused on instruction. This act–holding up a calendar and comparing what we do with what we need to do–is both instructive and sobering.

Applying this level of introspection to our own program design, over the course of the year, participants spend a total of 21 face to face days and more than 180 hours, engaged with Relay content, faculty, and/or assessments. By examining how the annual

course content aligns to and is distributed across each of the four "phases of leader learning" this strategic project suggests leaders need, the following trends emerge:

Phase	Principals Only 2016-17	Principal Supervisors 2016-17
Phase 1: Improving my practice.	116 hours	104 hours
Phase 2: Leading others to improve their practice.	18 hours	22 hours
Phase 3: Collaboratively planning and problem solving implementation at my site.	32 hours	36 hours
Phase 4: Sustaining the work for myself and others.	4 hours	8 hours

In past years, principal participants would have reentered their districts after experiencing more than 170 hours of additional professional training than those who supervise them! In the coming year, participating principal supervisors will receive the same level of training as their principals with slightly more time focused on phase 3 and 4 work. Beyond the content and practice opportunities these leaders are able to do independently, those who attend as nested teams have the opportunity to experience focused, extensive, uninterrupted time with their leaders on their core work: improving instruction at the school and now the system level. Beyond the formal learning they do in the presence of Relay faculty, the experiential component of traveling together, learning together, planning and providing feedback to each other promises to provide participants an opportunity to deepen relationships and develop a common language and tools. While the investment in time and costs are not trivial, it is our hope that this program will

provide principals with much of the social and emotional support that they need to sustain themselves and plant even deeper seeds of change once back home.

While participants may appreciate and benefit from additional time spent with their teams to problem solve challenges unique to their context, they may struggle to maximize the value of this time without sufficient tools, models, and examples of other leaders who have successfully implemented this work in schools that look and feel like their own. While the practices Uncommon Schools and Relay have developed have been borne largely out of highly effective charter schools, our district participants face unique challenges that make it difficult to translate some of these practices to their settings. For example, when we suggest that "effective principals" observe up to 15 teachers weekly, and follow each observation with a brief in person debrief meeting, many district principals often struggle to picture how to do this in their environment where teachers are not afforded time to meet weekly with their principal or are not willing to meet weekly with their principal (and do not face any repercussions from choosing not to do so). Our current approach often generically suggests that successful leaders "find the third way" in order to overcome this type of implementation challenge; however, the tools, videos, and models we have developed come from a narrow set of school leaders whose conditions are fundamentally different than many of those who are in the room and we have not yet developed a sufficient set of exemplars to share that are representative of the variety of schools we serve.

What is also evident is the limited change in the distribution of time allocated for leaders to develop skills to sustain the work for themselves and their teams. Given the investment that partners have made in Relay and the time it takes for leaders to initiate

and execute school improvement strategies, leadership turnover among Relay trained leaders stands to pose a recurring obstacle to Relay achieving its goals: if Relay principals follow the national average of principal turnover, both their impact, and ours will be compromised.

Our ability to design, develop, and deliver effective training that enables leaders to achieve both tasks–problem solve the implementation challenges in their context and develop skills and strategies to sustain the work–may be essential and difficult to execute given our current organizational capabilities. Clayton Christenson describes organizational capabilities as the "resources, processes, and values" an organization assembles to deliver a product or experience. In Relay's case, our two most coveted resources are our (and Uncommon's) practice based, largely technical content and knowledgeable and credible faculty. We have developed processes to efficiently deliver this content to participants in a model that is widely appealing. Finally, we have shaped our resources and processes around our chief value: observable, codified practices that can be recorded, scripted, and replicated in service of measurable improvements in student learning. As is evident in the above scope and sequence, while these organizational capabilities are our chief asset, they may eclipse the Phase 3 and 4 learning needs of our participants. Evidence of our struggle to develop a broader set of organizational capabilities emerged regularly in team conversations where we debated what we were best at, prepared to deliver, had expertise and bandwidth to develop, or were positioned to execute well. While we routinely recognized that our leaders faced the challenges that we described above, we cautiously (and appropriately) assessed these learning needs against our own capacity to deliver. Our scope and sequence reflects

where we collectively have landed; as I will suggest later, ongoing formative data collection will need to take place to determine to what extent our current approach will yield the intended outcomes.

3. Artifacts of our past success may impede our future progress.

As described previously, Relay GSE was founded as an offspring from a few successful, relatively high performing charter schools, all of whom shared a common struggle: a dearth of well trained teachers and leaders to supply their growing network of schools. These networks were made up of individual schools who collectively had developed incredibly efficient and effective systems to align their goals (performance on ELA and mathematics student assessments) with their tools (often centrally developed, high quality curriculum and instructional practices) and their workforce skill (typically young, academically high performing faculty who would receive extensive professional development). In these systems, managers of these processes helped the organization develop a honed set of organizational capabilities that value precision, optimization, and efficiency. As they have further optimized their systems, they have been able to grow, to achieve even greater success with a greater number of students, and to continue to set the benchmark for what is possible for many students who have historically been disenfranchised from receiving a high quality education. Much of this work has been accomplished through the exercise of strong management in an environment where extensive formal authority exists: appointed boards oversee talented and charismatic leaders who surround themselves with high quality talent who share the values, work ethic, and commitment to the end goal. The formula suggests that high selectivity and high accountability results in high performance.

In aiming to serve a diverse set of constituents beyond the high performing charter sphere, Relay faces a different environment where a different formula may need to be developed. Instead of having goals that are tied directly to the selective and high performing people within its organizational culture, Relay's goals must be achieved by a diverse set of professionals who have hired Relay to develop them, not manage them. While Relay may hold some formal authority that it can judiciously exercise to do certain things that may improve participant learning (in exchange for credit, participants must be in attendance, participate, submit assignments on time, etc.), the organization is limited in its ability to manage its participants in the same way that its founding organizations have successfully managed their own.

In "The Innovator's Dilemma" a seminal text that describes the competing forces that operate against innovation, Christensen explores how an organization's capabilities can define its disabilities and compromise its success. He argues:

> When managers tackle an innovation problem they instinctively assign capable people to do the job. But once they've found the right people, too many managers then assume that the organization in which they'll work will also be capable of succeeding at the task... The very processes and values that constitute an organization's capabilities in one context, define its disabilities in another context. (Christensen, 1997, xxvii).

Concretely, the processes and values that have worked in environments with strong vertical leadership structures and have been baked into Relay's organizational fabric, may not be effective in a fractured education landscape where such vertical leadership does not exist. In schools where the dominant culture affords teachers more authority than principals (or principals more capital than principal supervisors), the success of an observation and feedback protocol that assumes the leader knows more than the teacher may be limited.

The analyses described above are offered with the intent to promote reflection within the organization in order to better understand the past, analyze the present, and build the future. In conceiving of a new program targeting principal supervisors, Relay leaders believed that principals struggled to implement what are a complex set of interacting instructional leadership practices and that their supervisors could be leveraged as sustainable means to provide them with the support and accountability necessary to increase implementation. Our observations of the experiences and results of a diverse set of current and past principals reinforces our belief that leaders struggle to implement practices they want to improve, but often do not know how to do so. It is my hope that the above headlines may spur continued conversation and proactive planning to ensure that we thoughtfully decide to double down on strategies that have worked in the past while taking advantage of opportunities to innovate new ways of improving outcomes for our leaders, all in service of the students they serve.

VI. Implications for Site

As Relay assesses its options for increasing the effectiveness of its leadership programs, the results and analyses from this strategic project may suggest the following implications to:

1. Identify the highest leverage, most common implementation challenges (for districts and charters) and build content to address them.
2. Leverage existing strengths to optimize support and accountability for a selective group of participants.
3. Strengthen its internal capabilities to engage present and past participants in collaborative and continuous improvement
4. Develop new capabilities that promote leadership, stability, and sustenance.

5. Develop a more robust system to regularly use data to drive its internal program improvement.

1. Identify the highest leverage, most common implementation challenges that our district partners face and integrate this content into their learning.

As outlined in the first stage of the design process, Relay has an overwhelming amount of data that suggest many participants struggle with many of the same implementation challenges. Some of these challenges are efficacy oriented (i.e. I struggle to make time for this work), others are cultural (the students/staff shown in the Uncommon videos do not look like my own), while others are structural (my job descriptions requires me to be both a building/operations manager and instructional leader; how do I do both?). While Relay's general response is that all leaders face similar challenges and those who are the most successful "find the third way," there is an opportunity for Relay to do what it does best: identify the positive deviants among its growing alumnae base who have overcome one of these challenges, capture and codify models of what and how they overcame those challenges (video, case studies, artifacts), and incorporate these exemplars into differentiated instruction during its sessions. While Relay has the processes to do this, and there is consensus on the team that it would be both worthwhile and of value to current and participants, Relay should devote resources (time, expertise, and money) to make this vision a reality.

2. **Leverage existing strengths to optimize support and accountability for a selective group of participants.**

The notion of the "ambidextrous" organization–one that both "exploits" its existing strengths to execute strategies it knows while "exploring" new approaches necessary in uncertain or changing environments–may provide Relay with a way to increase

effectiveness in an environment where it exercises little formal authority (Tushman, 1997). The organization may decide to become more selective with whom it partners and intensify the mechanisms to hold these participants accountable. By screening a select group of applicants for not only will, readiness, skill, and for potentially even prior evidence of success (potentially deprioritizing diversity in school types), Relay could significantly simplify its theory of action, reduce the number of black boxes where magic must happen, and could prioritize its resources towards those schools and leaders that have momentum behind them. With more "ready" leaders they could arm these leaders with its optimized systems, tools, and practices to take them from good to great and presumably they would be able to demonstrate the measurable outcomes that they aspire to. With fewer participants, Relay could double down on the accountability and support that it provides them, potentially building out a "deep dive" consulting business model whose job is to provide intensive, on-the-ground support and provide those who have the skill and will the optimal number of touch points necessary to affect change. This scenario plays to Relay's strengths and enables the organization to transfer the "resources, processes, and values" that have been successful directly to organizations it has carefully selected to become high potential partners.

The shortcoming of adopting only this approach is obvious: selection is the opposite of scaling. If Relay continues its commitment to serve a growing and diverse set of schools whose leaders desire and students deserve access to more effective instructional leadership practices, it may simultaneously need to build new capabilities to do so.

3. Strengthen its internal capabilities to engage present and past participants in collaborative and continuous improvement.

The extent to which Relay-trained principals and supervisors will be able to enact, spread, and sustain the positively deviant practices within and across their schools will rely on their ability to create a similar holding environment for their learners, thus activating their teachers (for principals) and their principals (for principal supervisors), to engage in regular and ongoing opportunities to practice the skills and problem solve the challenges inherent in improvement. Reminding us that "a thousand hearings aren't worth one seeing, and a thousand seeings aren't worth one doing" (Pascale, Sternin, & Sternin, 2010, p. 46), the study of positive deviance suggests that once leaders return home, they must be prepared to design strategies for their teams to consistently "act their way into a new way of thinking" by "providing those who seek to learn with both the opportunity and the means to practice the new behavior" (p. 46).

To illustrate this point, Pascale, Sternin, and Sternin invoke a fascinating and potentially instructive analog:

> The contrast between robins and magpies is instructive. Robins are highly territorial, live comparatively isolated lives, and vocalize primarily to demark their territory. The magpie, by way of contrast is highly social and leverages its intelligence accordingly. (Whereas) the occasional robin might pick up a technique (to overcome the obstacle in between it and a potential food source) from its mate (or parent), …magpies are gregarious…demonstrate empathy and social altruism, play elaborate social games, and can work collectively to lift garbage bin lids as members take turns feeding. (2010, p. 12).

In order for our leaders to overcome the inevitable obstacles to implementation they will encounter, Relay may create the conditions for our leaders to act more like magpies than like robins. Instead of operating as territorial individuals, each facing similar implementation challenges on their own, we may develop means to support our leaders to

leverage their peer, professional, and social networks to collectively solve the contextual challenges that they face. Relay may consider designing or partnering with other organizations that have expertise in intentionally facilitating high quality professional learning communities (working groups, networked improvement communities, alumni associations, or career services offices, etc.). Doing so would serve the express purpose of helping leaders to continue to sharpen and deepen the implementation of the positively deviant practice long after their Relay experience ends and may lead to longer-lasting implementation.

4. Develop new capabilities that promote leadership stability and sustenance.

In order for Relay's programs to have impact, their leaders must be able to sustain themselves and the leaders in their midst. As has been cited previously, leader turnover will continue to pose significant challenges to those who hope to implement and sustain a coherent set of instructional improvement initiatives as described above. Recent studies show the cost of principal turnover is high for student achievement and district bottom lines. Extensive research suggests that "conservative estimates to develop, hire, and onboard each principal is $75K…Increasing principal retention rates to that of affluent schools can save US school districts $163 million annually" (School Leaders Network, 2014, p. 5). With 50% of newly hired principals staying for three years and less than 30% staying beyond five, current research suggests that "the resulting churn causes student achievement to drop in math and ELA in the year following the vacancy and it can take the next principal up to three years to regain forward progress for the school" (School Leaders Network, 2011, p. 12). In a study conducted by the National Association of

Elementary School Principals, principals cite four obstacles that drive them from their jobs:

1. Workload and extensive managerial tasks prevent more meaningful instructional leadership efforts,
2. Expensive personal costs; long hours and a significant toll on their physical and psychological well-being,
3. Local and state policies that tie principal hands in making critical decisions such as hiring, firing, and funding allocation flexibility,
4. Profound isolation on the job (School Leaders Network, p. 13).

Given the opportunity for principal supervisors and principals to work closely together, the organization is well positioned to help these teams build long-term internal capacity to collaboratively develop strategies that mitigate against each of these onerous and costly contributing factors of principal turnover. By affording principal supervisors with "positively deviant" leadership practices that can help them better manage workload, take care of their well-being, problem solve challenging external forces that affect their work, and provide them with the opportunity to feel connected to others (their peers, their supervisors, a team), Relay may both help its constituents and itself achieve longer-lasting impact goals.

5. Develop a more robust system to regularly use data to drive program improvement.

Finally, and maybe most importantly, Relay must deepen its capacity to intentionally use data to drive its own improvement. To do this, it must define what the most essential formative data is that can shed light on the level and quality of implementation of those practices that it believes most strongly predicts growth in student achievement. While tracking K12 student outcome data across a national network of

leaders is a difficult endeavor, there may be more localized opportunities to integrate common interim assessment data for smaller networks (Denver schools who use ANET for example) into its own data stream. To better understand what depth and quality of implementation looks like across its leaders Relay may consider conducting more formal research that tests the association between our existing assessments and K12 student growth and achievement as well as developing improved strategies to measure quality and quantity of data meetings, observations and feedback, percent of time that principals spend focused on day-to-day instruction, and/or how teachers perceive instructional leadership changing in their school. Relay would need to adopt or develop new resources (technologies, assessments, skilled people), processes (internal, team led data-driven practices), and values (that in addition to end of year assessments, other data points matter as well) in order to make this shift take place.

While each of the above strategies may provide desirable and impactful developments for the program, they may strain the viability and feasibility of the existing model. Limited time, content, expertise, financial support, and broader organizational capacity of both Relay and its participants will require prioritization, strategic planning, and a willingness to continue to innovate for the purpose of achieving deeper impact.

Beyond the strategic decisions raised above, the framework that has emerged from this strategic project may catalyze team reflection on our own beliefs and theories of action related to our work. Questions like "how do we know if our work is yielding the long-term impact we hope for?" How do we ensure that we avoid the "expert trap" that provides short-term technical solutions but fails to build long-term capacity for our constituents to deeply implement and improve this work within their context? Might "will

and skill" be necessary but not sufficient in order to ensure that positive deviant practice spreads throughout the diverse set of contexts that we aim to serve? Might there be an opportunity to innovatively provide our alumnae with affordable, ongoing, and regionalized support to help them deepen their systemic capacity to make this practice stick? These questions will require the organization to engage in its own reflective, data-driven, and strategic work in order to continuously improve in ways that both deepen its impact and increase the scale of its work.

VII. Implications for Sector

The approach, the findings, and the implications identified in this strategic project may prove to be valuable to others who are interested in pursuing innovative strategies to address particularly "wicked problems" in education.

The approach I have taken in this strategic project suggests a few implications for the sector:

1. **Design thinking is a valuable tool to school and system improvement.**
2. **Positive deviants provide important insights into particularly perplexing problems.**
3. **The social system is key to enabling practice to spread**
4. **The leaders of leaders have significant potential to drive system level improvement.**

1. Design thinking is a valuable tool to school and system improvement.

Design thinking begins with the end user in mind–what are the current hopes, ambitions, experience, and pain points of the user(s) and what are desirable, viable, and impactful "designs" that may help this user accomplish the job they are currently struggling to do? Following a principal around a school for a day will shed light on the

monumental task they have been asked to do: improve student learning amidst a sea of incoherent directives, misaligned tools, and a teaching force that is markedly mixed in their abilities to deliver high quality instruction on a daily basis.

My analysis of the interviews, surveys, and observations of principals doing their work raised three design principles to the surface: coherence, feedback, and support. Given the complexity of the job, principals crave a common, aligned set of goals and tools they can use to accelerate the development of their teams. Throughout this process, they seek to get better at their work and, like other performance professionals, appreciate high leverage, bite-sized, actionable feedback they can translate into their practice. Further, amidst the numerous and unpredictable challenges they face each day– operational mishaps, disgruntled students, family meetings, challenging personnel issues– principals crave more support than they often get. Educators who are interested in improving principal performance and longevity may consider examining their initiatives, tools, or policies through the principal's lens.

2. Positive deviants provide important insights into particularly perplexing problems.

What makes this project unique is where it looks for solutions. Positive deviance, the subtly complex approach of looking closely at positive outliers, provides us with a framework, lessons learned, and a set of pitfalls to avoid (like the expert trap), when attempting to identify and spread effective practice. It relies on an underlying assumption that "somewhere, someone has solved this problem" and looks to unlikely people in ordinary contexts for practices that, if spread, have the potential to transform outcomes for students.

Rather than relying solely on leadership theory, in this strategic project, I have been guided by observations of practice. Whether live or via video, these observations of effective leaders conducting weekly data meetings with teams of teachers, or having coaching conversations about the instruction they observed in classrooms, allowed patterns of behavior to emerge that separate high performing principals from less effective principals. Their level of planning for meetings, their knowledge of academic content, their economy of language, the questions they asked were often key, observable differentiators that separate principal practice.

The work of Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, Doug Lemov and other leaders at Uncommon Schools who have devoted innumerable hours to the close study of observable practices of teachers and leaders whose performance is outstanding provides a tremendous contribution to the field of education. While most of this codification of effective practice has taken place in their schools, effective teachers and leaders exist within many of our schools. It is our job to look for them and to pay attention to what they do.

3. The social system is key to enabling practice to spread

Education remains a social enterprise. Families send children to schools where they expect knowledgeable, professional, and caring teachers and leaders help them develop the academic and social skills that will prepare them to be successful and fulfilled adults. Teachers interact not only with their students, but with their students' families, each other and the leaders within their buildings.

Inspiring change to take place in deeply social settings like schools requires expert knowledge of technical skills and tools as well as equally expert knowledge of how to

manage and nurture change among human beings. Like Pascale, Sternin, and Sternin (2010) remind us, effective practice spreads fastest when social networks are activated–like magpies. While practice can spread from one individual to the next, leaders who can cultivate social networks to spread practice are more likely than others to see improvement spread. Organizations that have strong technical capabilities they wish to get out into the world may consider hiring some "magpies" in their ranks. Conversely, organizations that have strong networks but weak technical tools and skills, may do well to invest in the other.

4. The leaders of leaders have potential to drive system level improvement.

One way to improve schools is to hire rock star teachers and principals. Another is to build a stronger, more sustainable system that develops high performing teachers and principals. Given the important role that school leaders play in ensuring that children have access to high quality teachers across a network of classrooms within a school, system-level leaders hold the important job of ensuring that high quality principals staff their schools. Just as the role of the school principal has shifted from that of building manager to one of instructional leader, so too has the job of the principal supervisor. Increasingly principal supervisors are expected to be skilled instructional leaders–able to analyze data deeply to not only determine gaps in student learning but to help principals and teachers develop a detailed vision of what to do about it. They conduct classroom observations, support principals as they determine the highest leverage steps a teacher might take to further improve student learning in the classroom, and help provide coherence among an unsettled sea of competing priorities and initiatives. Most importantly, as we heard from principals, they are providing feedback to principals and

must have the content, pedagogical, and leadership knowledge to make their feedback high quality, high leverage, and useful to their leaders.

As network leaders, principal supervisors have the responsibility to oversee the development not of one leader in one school but of networks of leaders over many schools. Through this strategic project, it is my hope that the National Principal Supervisor Academy that will launch this summer will help us test our assumption that these leaders have an influential role to play in accelerating the development of principals.

VIII. Implications for Self

Three big headlines stand out to describe the implications this strategic project has had on my leadership:

1. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. (African proverb)
2. Know when to stop thinking and start acting. Know when to stop acting and start thinking.
3. The data is important, but it is people we must move.

1. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. (African proverb)

This proverb sums up my overarching and most valuable takeaway from this strategic project. As a leader who worked both remotely and on site, I have been pushed to lean into a team to help me build my content knowledge, push my thinking, and to collaboratively work together to build a better product than I could build on my own. As both a resident and as one of the only team members who did not come to the team

through existing partnerships (either via Uncommon Schools or the National Principal Academy Fellows Program), I frequently relied on my teammates to share historical or contextual knowledge, to call out and challenge my assumptions, and to spend time co-designing key aspects of the program I did not have the expertise, the skills, or perspective to do on my own. Through this process, I often struggled to seek out advice early enough, and often waited until I had a refined product to share before soliciting the strength of my team to help me form it. The result of this approach led to a more limited program design than one that may have been achieved using a different approach. Moving forward, given the opportunity to start over, I would have established a formal design team that would meet more regularly in order to create a "brain trust,"[26] mapped these meetings against a public, strategic calendar (I maintained my own, but did not share it widely or engage others in its design), and would have created more opportunities to publicly share and elicit feedback regarding the direction the work was taking, the key questions still needing to be solved, and the next steps we hoped to take. This recognition–that we are better together than we are as individuals–remains an important takeaway that has positively impacted my leadership development.

2. Know when to stop thinking and start acting. Know when to stop acting and start thinking.

Helping an organization hold a mirror up to itself is a powerful act of leadership. Given how aligned my values, skills, and expertise are to Relay's (which is what led me to the organization in the first place), I experienced an overwhelming urge to dive deep into the fast moving river of work that was underway. As a member of a lean team that

[26] The "brain trust" was a meeting facilitated by two team members to begin to create a vision for alumni outreach.

was feverishly executing a year long fellowship program for hundreds of school leaders, there was a never ending list of meaningful work to do–designing and delivering professional development sessions, providing feedback on video assessments, participating in team meetings–all at the quality that is central to Relay's brand. This inclination to act, within an organization whose approach to school improvement I am aligned to, often made it difficult to stop and think strategically about what blind spots may be preventing us from achieving the ultimate goals that we set out to achieve.

Just as my implications for this site (described above) suggest that the organization both double down on its core capabilities while intentionally exploring and building new capabilities, I believe that I, too, must do the same. Within the context of my work leading this project, there were numerous opportunities for me to be more proactive, more planned, and pay more attention to detail; doing so would have improved the quality of work I accomplished. Without taking the time to stop, think, and listen closely to the more nuanced, yet important signals that seem to suggest that more, better, and faster work may not be adequate to solve new challenges the organization is attempting to solve, I would have missed an important opportunity to lead. As a result of the design thinking process, I have had to learn to pay better attention to those signals that define the edge between which innovations are comfortable and those which challenge institutional culture, and be prepared to lean in on those aspects of the program design that may surface important blind spots that could ultimately limit program impact. Knowing when to step up, step back, and how to lead in this regard has been an important outcome of my learning throughout the Ed.L.D. program and as a resident at Relay.

3. The data is important, but it is people that we must move.

Anyone who knows me knows the urgency I feel to see evidence of success for my students, and my "relentless focus on evidence" has been an integral component of the professional success I have experienced. As a teacher and leader, I am driven to see students who few people believe can become "expert thinkers and complex communicators" devour rigorous texts, generate sophisticated analyses, and assert substantial ideas in writing and in words. I continue to believe deeply that the most essential task teachers and leaders get right is the ability to deeply examine student work for evidence of learning, ask important questions about what students are struggling with, and make plans to address it. This careful attention to the two questions, "are our students learning and how do we know?" is baked into my DNA and drives me to improve the work I do each day.

AND…at the heart of teaching, learning, classrooms and schools, it is people that must be moved. In the crucible that is the Ed.L.D. cohort experience, and as echoed in this strategic project, I have come to develop a greater appreciation that data does not necessarily move others as it does me. If, as system level leaders, we wish to continue to increase the number of children who experience high quality teaching and learning each day, we must be able to activate people. For me, I must temper my own proclivity to think, analyze, and act and instead ask myself how others feel, what they are motivated by, and how I can help. I have long admired others who strike this balance better than I and will continue to stretch to do the same.

IX. Conclusion

My decision to pursue the Ed.L.D. began as a burning curiosity as a principal: wondering how might we develop the quantity and quality of leaders necessary to lead many networks of classrooms and schools necessary to radically improve teaching and learning for historically underserved students. In this strategic project, I have had the opportunity to partner with an entrepreneurial organization (Relay Graduate School of Education), that has grown out of a set of schools in a particular region of the United States (Uncommon Schools), who have employed a particular set of practices (largely articulated and influenced by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo and his team) that consistently yield "positively deviant" outcomes for students.

The practices outlined in this work suggests that education leaders who seek to learn, practice, implement, and spread positively deviant practice will be most successful if they engage in professional learning experiences that help improve:

1. their baseline proficiency with the positively deviant tools, systems, and practice.
2. their ability to design and execute ongoing opportunities for others to learn and practice these positively deviant skills
3. their ability to collaboratively problem solve the complex implementation within their unique context
4. their ability to sustain the work that enables it to live on beyond their tenure.

While this strategic project is focused largely on the development of a leadership program for principal supervisors, the application of design thinking and positive-deviance within an entrepreneurial setting may have utility to leaders working to solve other, equally important, equally challenging, and potentially impactful problems. By listening closely to users in order to inform the design, development, and launch of new

programs and while looking to positive outliers for potential solutions, and paying attention to the social system in which the people interact each day, it is my hope that this approach provides the sector with yet another tool with which to solve, or at least better manage, some of the most important, and intractable of today's challenges.

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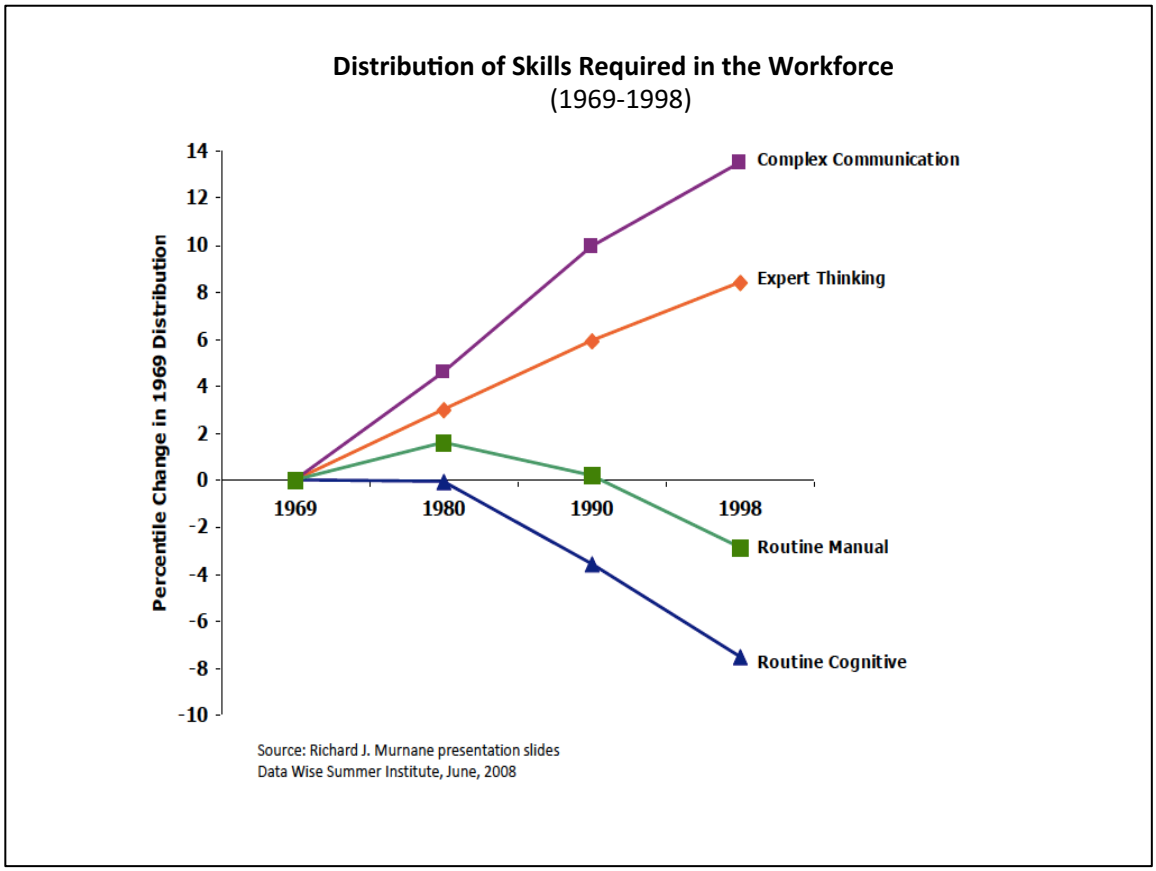
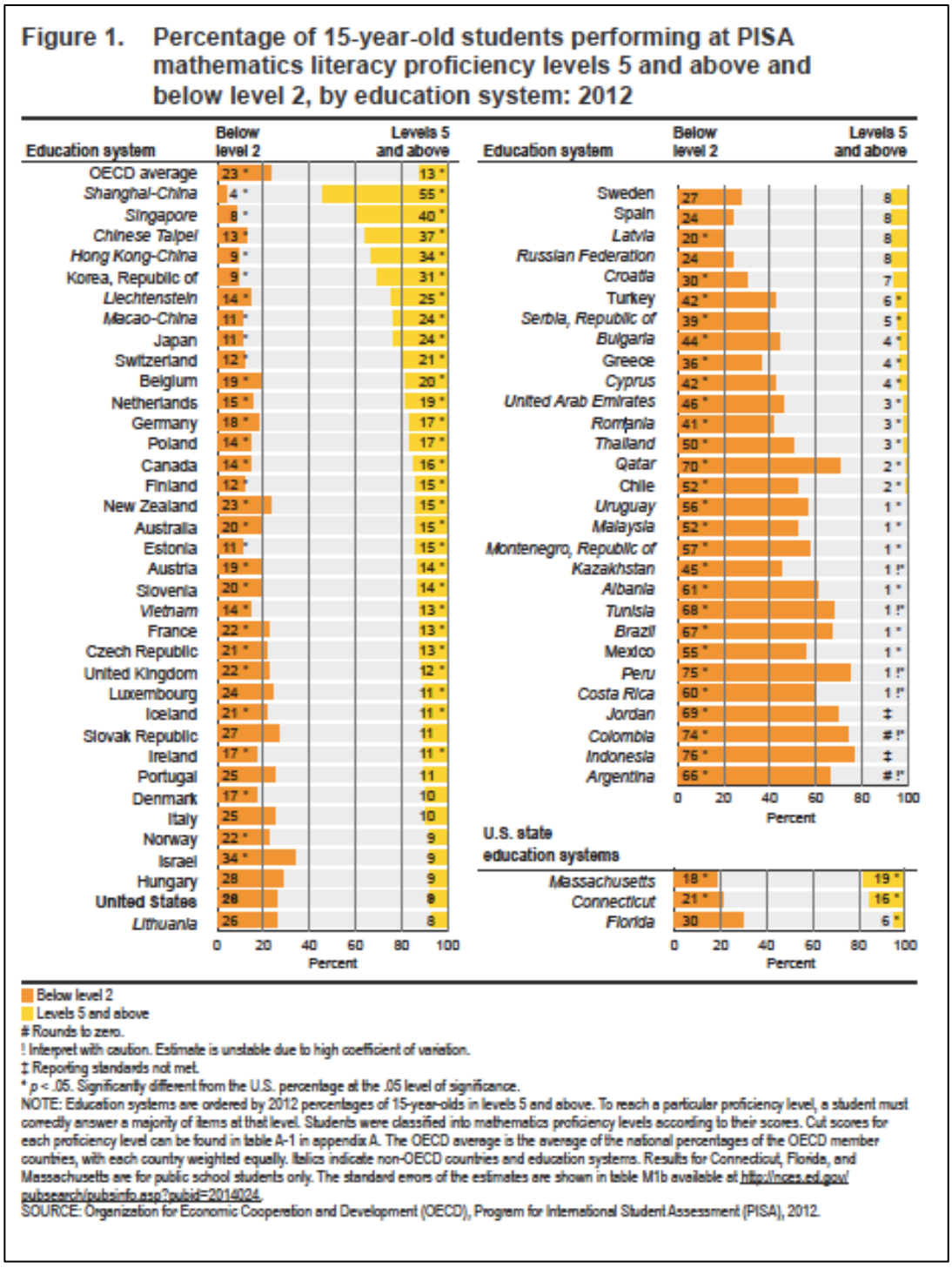
Appendices

Appendix 1: Distribution of Skills Required in the Workforce



p. 50. Levy, F., & Murnane, R. J. (2004). The new division of labor.

Appendix 2A: International Comparison of 15-year-old Mathematics Literacy



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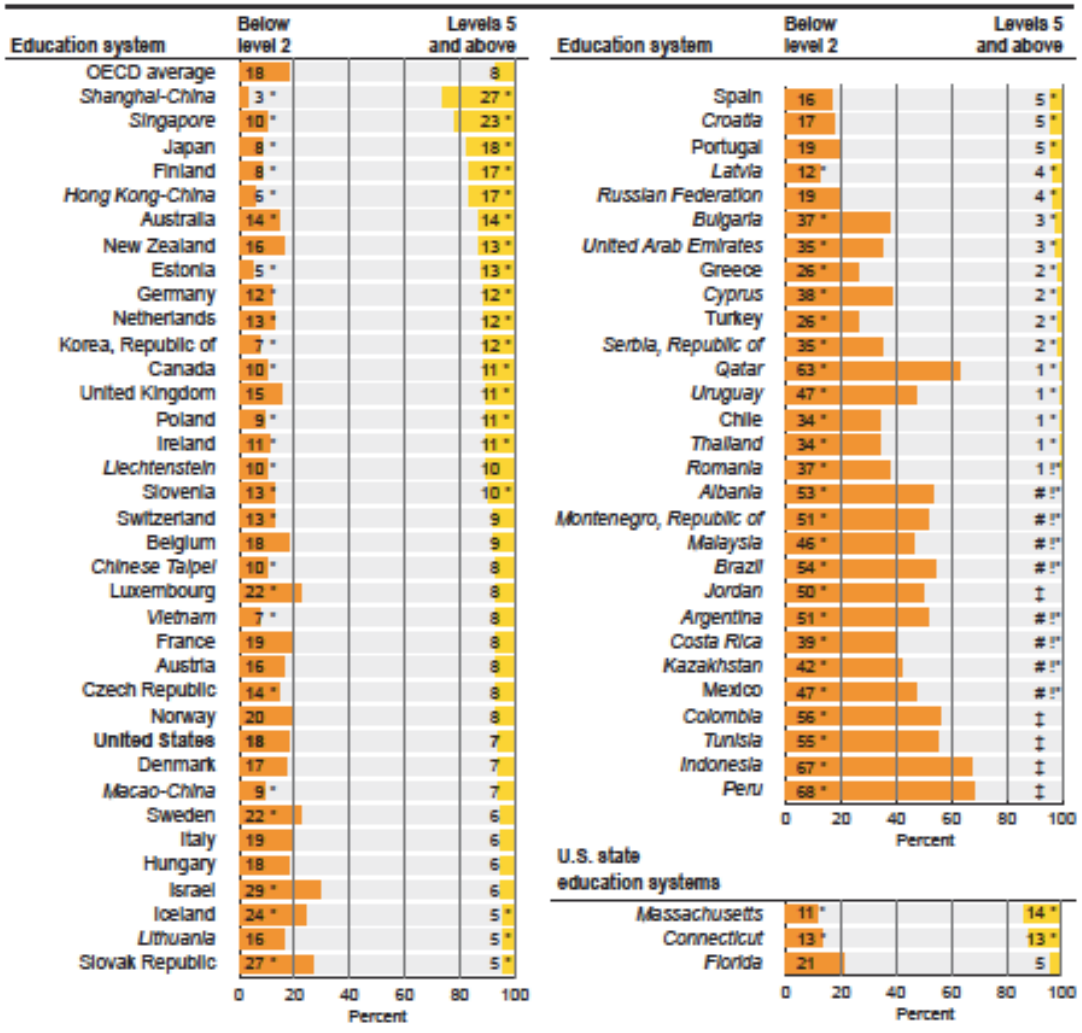
Appendix 2B: International Comparison of 15-year-old Science Literacy

Appendix 2B: International Comparison of 15-year-old Science Literacy

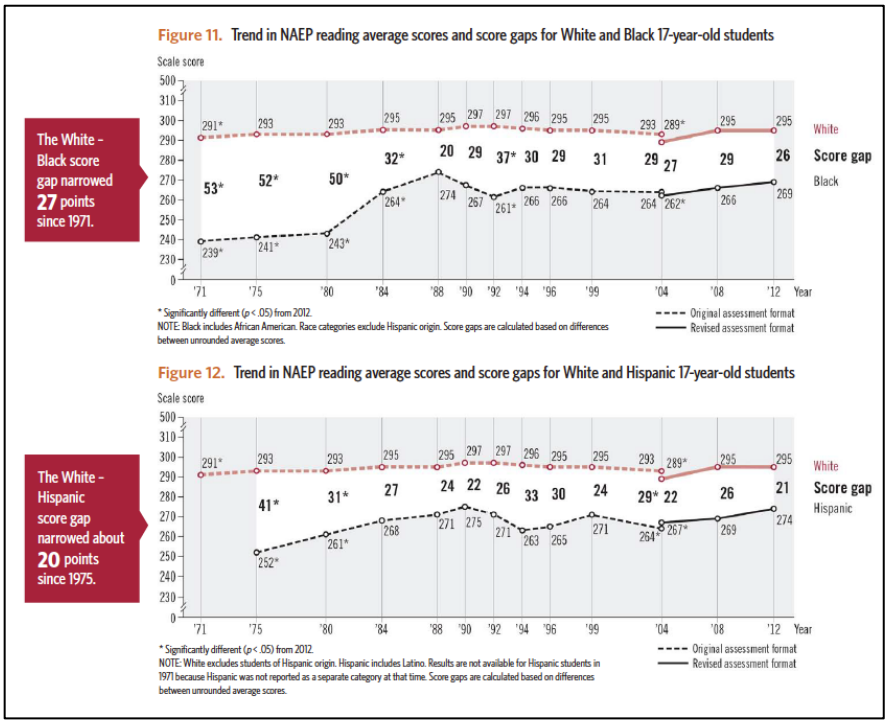
Figure 2. Percentage of 15-year-old students performing at PISA science literacy proficiency levels 5 and above and below level 2, by education system: 2012

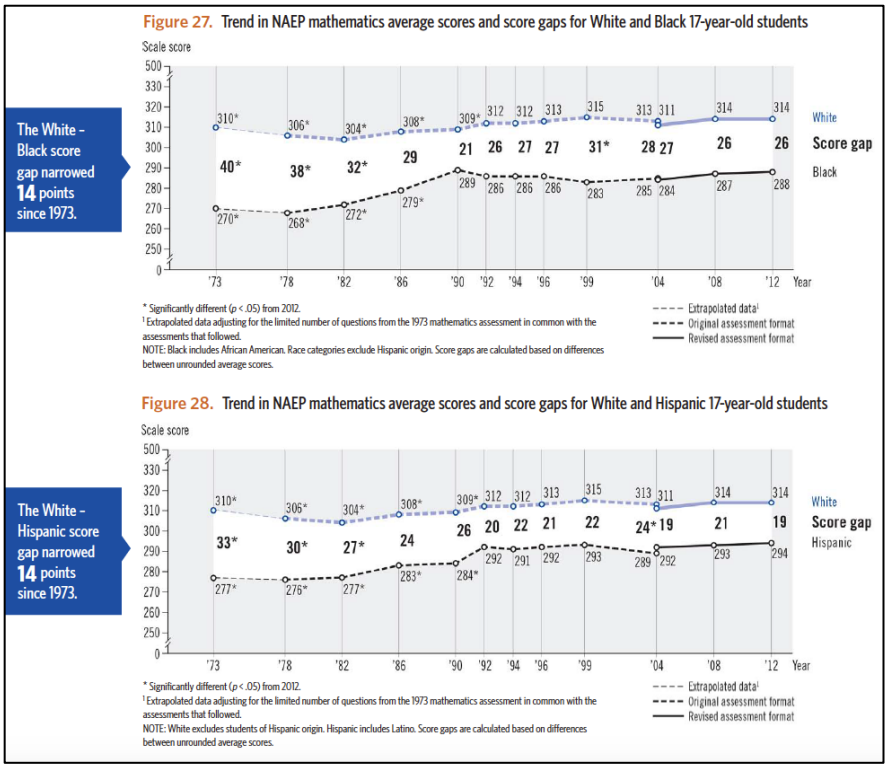


Below level 2
Levels 5 and above
Rounds to zero.
! Interpret with caution. Estimate is unstable due to high coefficient of variation.
‡ Reporting standards not met.
* $p < .05$. Significantly different from the U.S. percentage at the .05 level of significance.
NOTE: Education systems are ordered by 2012 percentages of 15-year-olds in levels 5 and above. To reach a particular proficiency level, a student must correctly answer a majority of items at that level. Students were classified into science proficiency levels according to their scores. Cut scores for each proficiency level can be found in table A-1 in appendix A. The OECD average is the average of the national percentages of the OECD member countries, with each country weighted equally. Italics indicate non-OECD countries and education systems. Results for Connecticut, Florida, and Massachusetts are for public school students only. The standard errors of the estimates are shown in table S1b available at http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2014024.
SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 2012.

p. 16 Kelly, D., Xie, H., Nord, C.W., Jenkins, F., Chan, J.Y., and Kastberg, D. (2013). *Performance of U.S. 15-Year-Old Students in Mathematics, Science, and Reading Literacy in an International Context: First Look at PISA 2012* (NCES 2014-024). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved [date] from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.

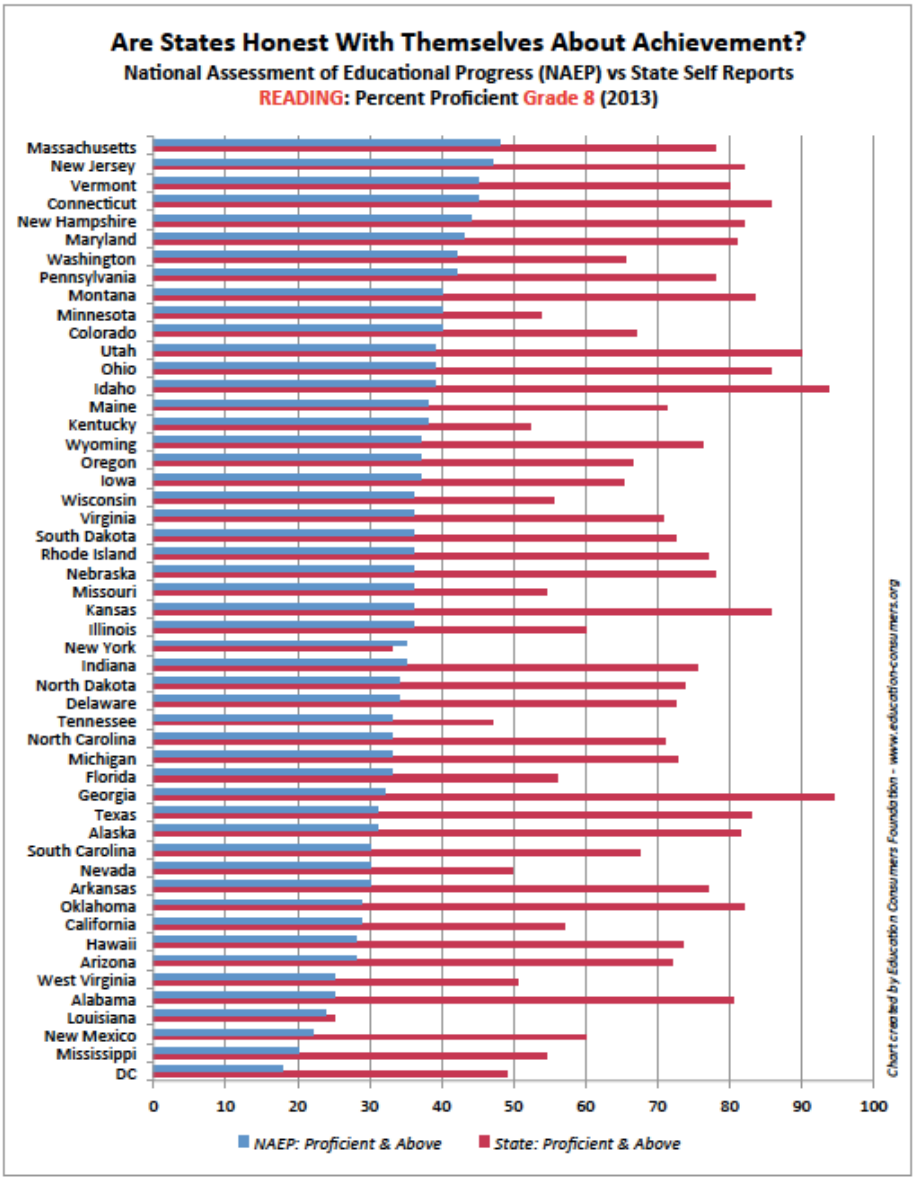
Appendix 3: National Assessment of Educational Progress, Reading and Mathematics





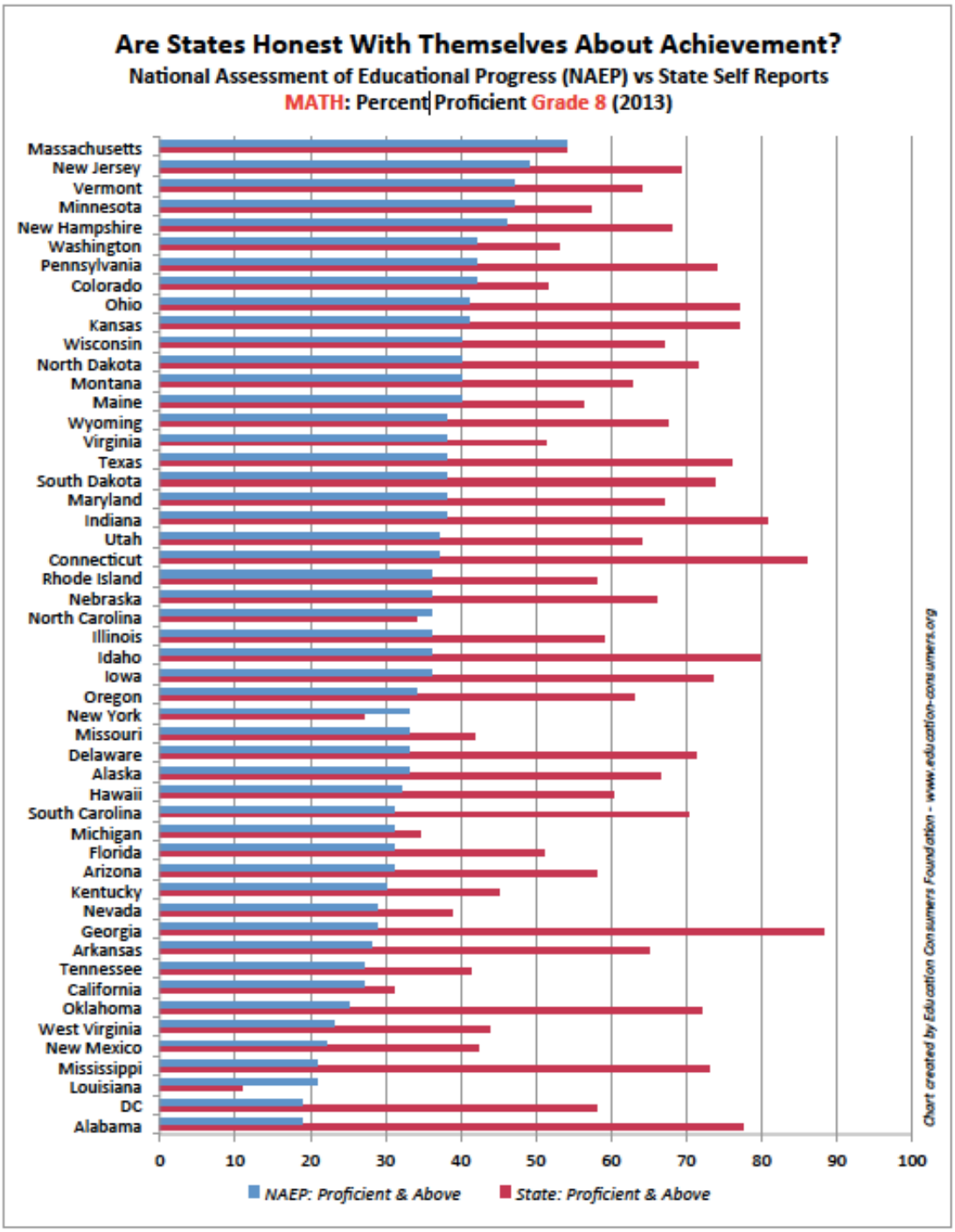
National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *The Nation's Report Card: Trends in Academic Progress 2012*. NCES 2013-456.

Appendix 4A: National Assessment of Educational Progress vs. State Self Reports, Reading, Grade 8



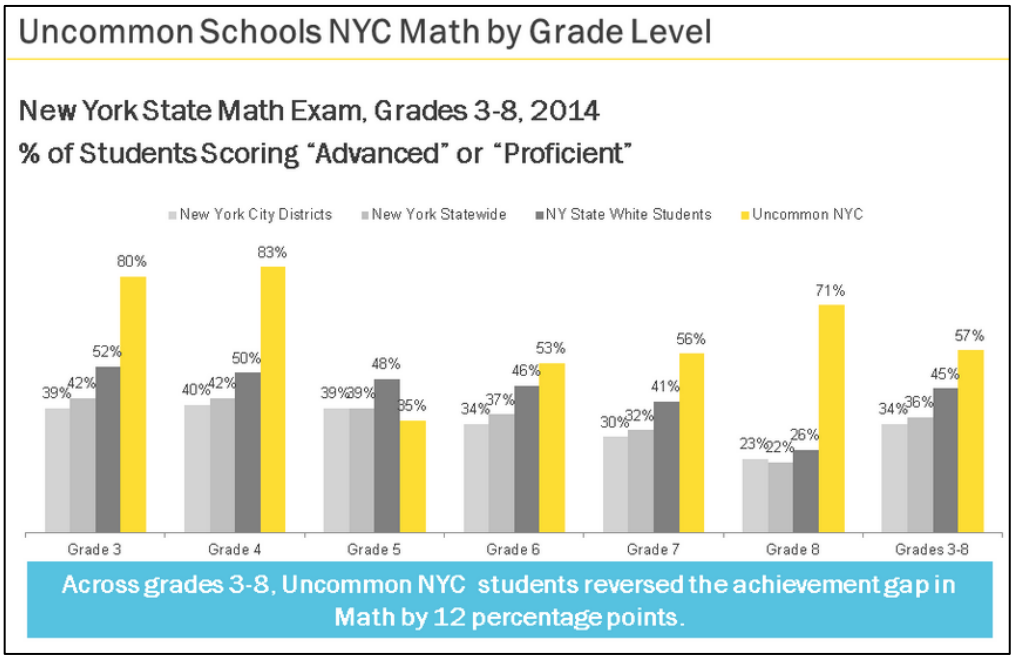
Education Consumers Foundation. (2013). Are States Honest With Themselves About Achievement? Retrieved from http://education-consumers.org/states-reporting-truth-student-achievement/.

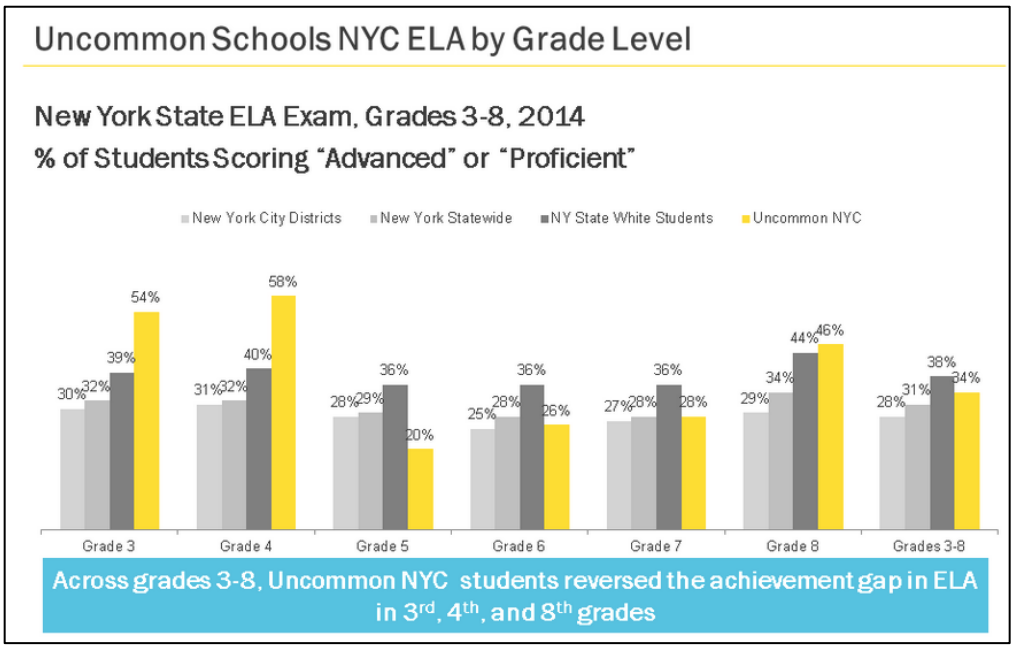
Appendix 4B: National Assessment of Educational Progress vs. State Self Reports, Mathematics, Grade 8



Education Consumers Foundation. (2013). Are States Honest With Themselves About Achievement? Retrieved from http://education-consumers.org/states-reporting-truth-student-achievement/.

Appendix 5: Uncommon Schools State Test Results 2014





"State Test Results for Uncommon Schools." *Charter School State Test Results*. Uncommon Schools, n.d. Web. 25 Mar. 2016. <http://www.uncommonschools.org/results-for-charter-schools>.

Appendix 6: Six Steps for Effective Feedback

SIX STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK:

Prepare During observation	**Prepare—During Observation** • Videotape while you observe: mark the time stamps in your six steps planning template • Plan your feedback while observing: fill out the six steps planning template • Re-watch video once to tighten probing question and practice • Have teacher's upcoming lesson plans ready for planning ahead
1 Praise 1-2 min	**Praise—Narrate the positive:** **What to say:** • "We set a goal last week of _____ and I noticed how you [met goal] by [state concrete positive actions teacher took.]." • "What made that successful? What was the impact of [that positive action]?"
2 Probe 2-6 min	**Probe = Check for Understanding:** **Start with the end goal:** • "What is the purpose of _____ [concise action step/taxonomy topic]? What impact does that have on your instruction?" • "What was your objective/goal for _____ [the activity, the lesson]? What did the students have to do to meet this goal/objective? • "Let's look at your upcoming assessment and the questions measuring your objective. What will students need to be able to do to answer these correctly?" **Analyze the gap:** • "What is the gap between [your goal/purpose] and [your activity/your in-class quiz/your independent practice] today?" • "What was the challenge in implementing this effectively?" • Show a classroom video of the moment in class that clearly demonstrates the problem: "What are the students doing? What are you doing?" • Present classroom evidence: "Do you remember what happened in class when ___?" [Teacher then IDs what happened; leader provides data if teacher cannot] "What effect did that have on the class/learning?" **Close the gap (present a model, watch an exemplar, debrief realtime feedback):** • Show video of effective teaching: "What do you notice about how the teacher did _____? How is this different than what you did in class?" • Model it for the teacher: "What did you notice about how I just did [this action] compared to how you did it in class today?" • Intervention in class: "When I intervened, what did I do? What was the impact of the intervention?"
3 Action Step 1 min	**Action step: high-leverage, measurable, bite-sized** **Name explicitly the action step:** • Choose an action step that is linked to the teacher's PD goals. "In keeping with our goal of ____, the next thing we want to do is…" • State clearly and concisely the bite-size action step that is the highest lever. • Have teacher restate the action step; then write it down

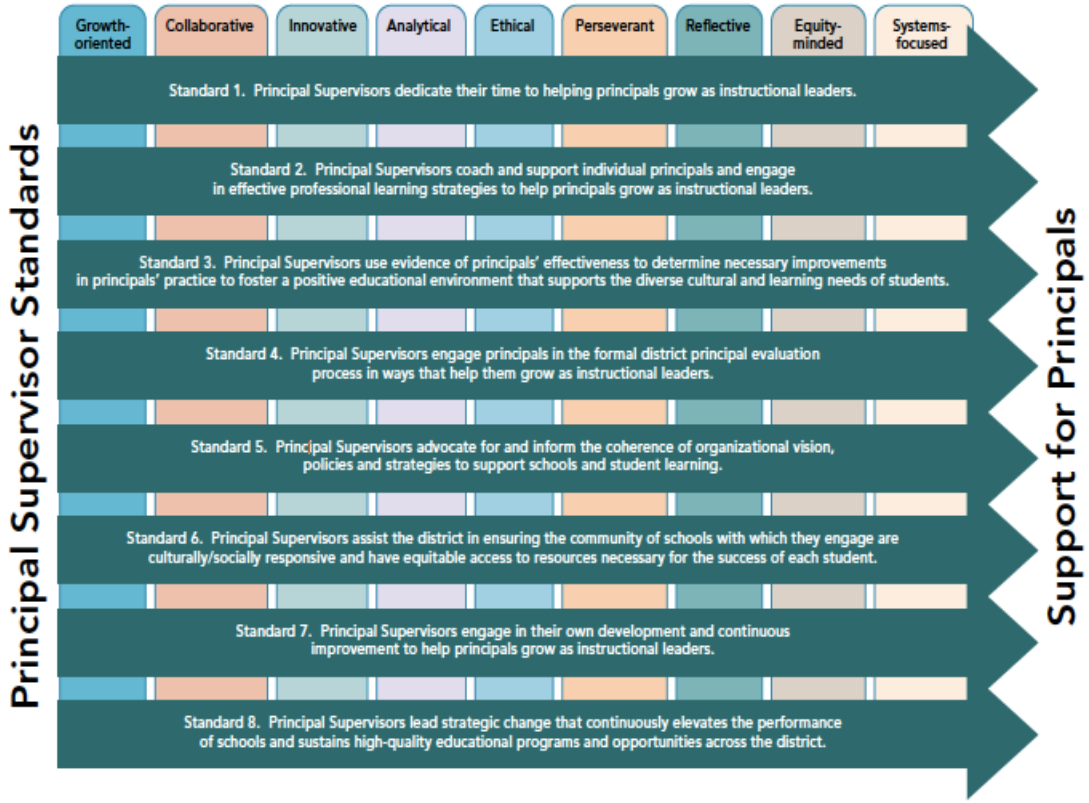
4 **Plan Ahead** **As much time as remains**	**Plan Ahead—Design/revise upcoming lesson plans to implement this action:**
	Script the changes into upcoming lesson plans • "Where would be a good place to implement this in your upcoming lessons?" • "What are all the actions you need to take/want to see in the students?" • Script the language and actions to be taken—have lesson plans and/or a template ready for the teacher to fill in. • Plan before you practice: keep probing to make the plan more precise and more detailed • "Now that you've made your initial plan, what will do you if [state student behavior/response that will be challenging]? • **If teacher needs extra development:** Model for the teacher first, then debrief. "What do you notice about how I did that?"
5 **Practice** **As much time as remains**	**Practice—Role play how to implement action step in current or future lessons:**
	Round 1—"Let's Practice" or "Let's take it live." • [When applicable] Stand up/move around classroom to simulate the feeling of class • Pause the role play at the point of error to give immediate feedback • Repeat until the practice is successful. CFU: "What made this successful?" **Round 2—add complexity (if mastering it):** • [Once successful in Round 1]: "Let's try that again. This time I will be [student x who is slightly more challenging]."
6 **Follow-up** **1-3 min**	**Set Timeline for Follow-up:**

	• "When would be best time to observe your implementation of this?" OR "When I review your plans, I'll look for this modification."
	• **Newer teacher:** "I'll come in tomorrow and look for this technique."
	• Set dates for all of the following—both teacher and leader write them down:
	  ○ **Completed Materials:** when teacher will complete revised lesson plan/materials.
	  ○ **Leader Observation**: when you'll observe the teacher
	  ○ **(When valuable) Teacher Observes Master Teacher**: when they'll observe master teacher in classroom or via video implementing the action step
	  ○ **(When valuable) Self-Video**: when you'll tape teacher to debrief in future mtg

Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2016). *Uncommon Schools and Relay Graduate School of Education, Training Resources* for National Principal Academy Fellows Program

Appendix 7: Model Principal Supervisor Standards

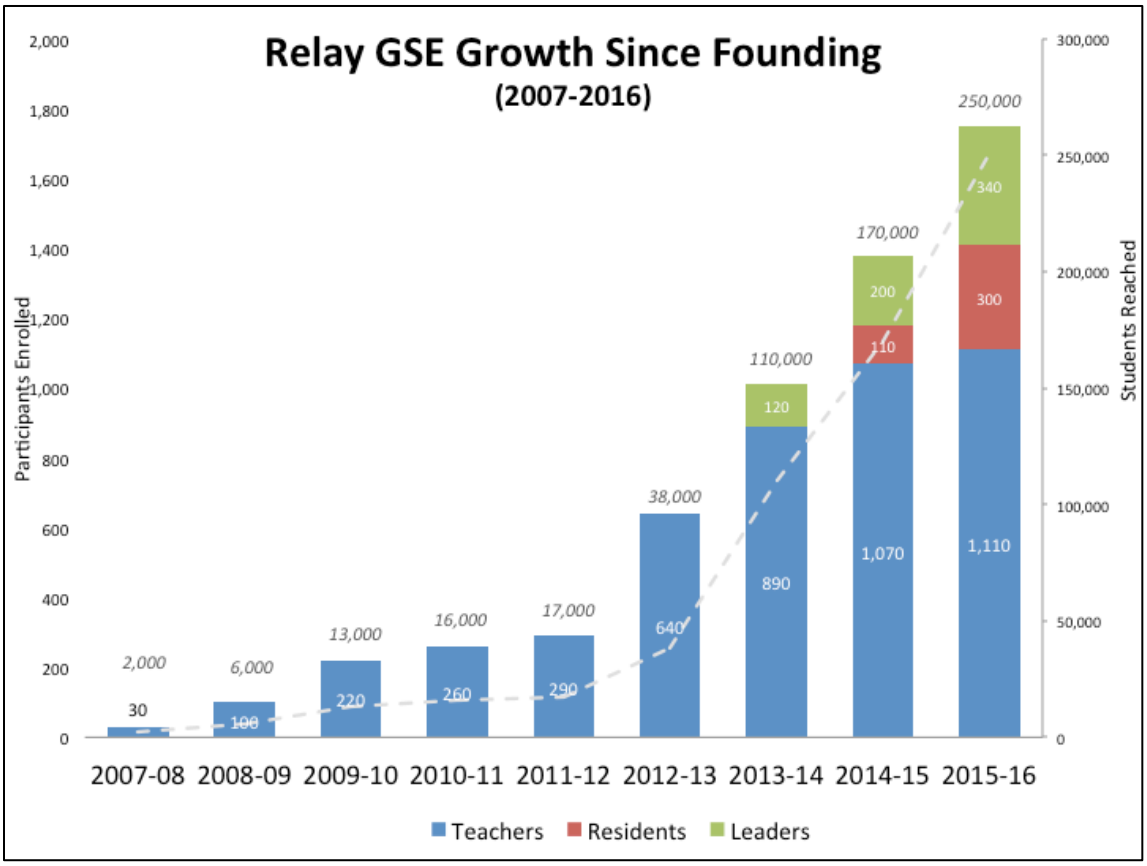
Figure 2 illustrates how these dispositions integrate with the standards and are essential to being an effective principal supervisor.



Note: Standard 1 is from the District Leadership Design Lab's *Principal Supervisor Performance Standards Version 1.0, Standard 1* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2014). Standards 2 and 3 are based on DL2's *Principal Supervisor Performance Standards Version 1.0, Standards 2, 3 and 4.* Standard 4 is from DL2's *Principal Supervisor Performance Standards Version 1.0, Standard 5.*

p. 16. Council of Chief School State Officers, Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards, Wallace Foundation, 2015.

Appendix 8: Relay Graduate School of Education Organizational Growth Over Time



Source: Relay Graduate School of Education, 2015

Appendix 9: Principal Manager Case Study

Executing Effective Principal Check-Ins

In Champion Public Schools, a medium sized, northeastern urban public school system with 14,000 students, there are 49 schools, each led by a single school principal. System-wide, the system employees 6 instructional superintendents who each manage between 6 and 8 principals within networks based predominantly on student age (elementary, middle, and high) and geographic communities they serve.

It is Friday, and as one instructional superintendent, Dr. Williams, looks at her calendar for the next week she knows that she must be deliberate about how she spends her time if she is to close the gap between her lowest and highest performing students.[27]

She knows that one of her principals, Ms. West, has been fighting a number of fires at the school that were taking her away from classrooms each week. Just in the last week alone, Ms. West emailed Dr. Williams to ask that they focus their upcoming time together on how best to respond to two issues weighing heavily on Ms. West's mind:

- A parent continually showed up at the school demanding to see Ms. West to discuss why teachers continually "single out" her child for low-level behavioral infractions (not tracking the teacher, not prepared, no homework, etc.). Ms. West has met frequently with this parent in the past to address these concerns, though she continues to call, show up unannounced, and demand that if she doesn't meet with her each time she shows up, she will go "straight to the board."
- Just this week, a teacher resigned, leaving the school short-staffed in an 8th grade math classroom. This unexpected departure has required Ms. West to commit time to finding a temporary teacher, occasionally filling in herself given her background in math, until the position can be filled permanently. Knowing how fast paced the 8th grade math curriculum is, she fears losing any learning time with these students.

In preparation for her meeting with Ms. West, Dr. Williams reviewed Ms. West's goals, her action steps from their last meeting, and the most recent interim assessment data.[28] Recognizing how difficult it is to juggle the urgent demands of running a school with the important work of paying attention to the quality of teaching and learning taking place in classrooms, Dr. Williams sent the following email to Ms. West:

> *Dear Ms. West,*
> *I am looking forward to meeting next week. I know you have been busy fighting a number of fires this week. I am looking forward to problem solving these with you and would like to suggest we prioritize the bulk of our time together on our*

[27] See Figure 1. Dr. Williams' Weekly Calendar
[28] See Figure 2. Instructional Superintendent Network Tracker

goals while reserving 30 minutes at the end of our meeting to brainstorm solutions to the non-instructional items that are weighing most heavily on you.

Per our usual plan, please send me a completed check in template with the bright spots, data and culture updates, as well as the 3 classrooms you would like to observe together.[29] *Based on the interim assessment data and your goals, I would like to suggest you determine which classrooms are the highest priority classes for us to visit so we can work together to identify the high quality action steps you can use when planning strong feedback meetings with your teachers.*

If you can get the completed check-in template to me 48 hours ahead of our meeting, I will review, add to it, and send it back to you 24 hours ahead of time so that we can maximize our time together.

Looking forward to it! Thanks for your hard work!
Best,
Dr. Williams

On Sunday evening, Dr. Williams receives a completed check-in template from Ms. West.[30] She knows completing her portion will be her work first thing in the morning in order to get it back to Ms. West so that can make the most of their meeting together.

Figure 1. Dr. Williams' Weekly Calendar

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Monday</th><th>Tuesday</th><th>Wednesday</th><th>Thursday</th><th>Friday</th></tr>
<tr><td>8:00</td><td>Meet with Principal 1</td><td>District Cabinet Meeting</td><td></td><td>Hold for School Inspections</td><td>Plan for Principal 3/4</td></tr>
<tr><td>10:00</td><td>Meet with Principal 2</td><td></td><td>Meet with Principal 5</td><td></td><td rowspan="4">Work day (No Scheduled Meetings)</td></tr>
<tr><td>12:00</td><td></td><td>Meet with Principal 3</td><td></td><td>Meet with Principal 6</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:00</td><td></td><td>Meet with Principal 4</td><td rowspan="2">Instructional Superintendent Working Group</td><td>Meet with Principal 7</td></tr>
<tr><td>4:00</td><td>Plan for Principal 5</td><td>Plan for Principal 6 and 7</td><td>Plan for Principal 1&2</td></tr>
</table>

[29] See Figure 3. Principal Manager/Principal Check In Template
[30] See Figure 4. Principal's completed Check In Template

Figure 2. Principal Manager Dashboard

Principal Manager Dashboard 2015-16

			K-4			5-8			9-12
			ES1	ES2	ES3	MS1	MS2	MS3	HS
DATA	SUBJECT/GRADE:	TARGE	Yr5	Yr2	Yr1	Yr1	Yr3	Yr2	Yr3
Data Driven Instruction Overall	Literacy IA's +/- Last year	0	-7	-19	-23	4	8	14	-5
	Math IA's +/- Last year	0	-1	-3	-2	-6	2	1	9
	Science IA's +/- Last year	0	--	--	--	-2	-1	1	-6
	History IA's +/- Last year	0	--	--	--	-1	-7	-3	-1
	Spanish IA's +/- Last year	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	-4
	Implementation Rubric	90%	90%	90%	90%	92%	92%	93%	88%
Observation and Feedback	Avg # obs/teacher	11							
	% of Feedback Measurable, Actionable	90%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Teacher Satisfaction with Inst'l Support	4.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
PD	% of Teachers Meeting PD Goals	60%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Proficiency of PD Rubric	3.00	-	-	-	2.25	3.10	3.45	-
Planning	Curr. Plans Proficient	90%	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Lesson Plans Proficient	90%	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Student Culture	School Culture Rubric % Categories Prof.	90%	100%	95%	79%	82%	86%	90%	95%
Staff Culture	Staff Culture Rubric	3							
	Teachers Who Rate Work Unsustainable	0%	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Avg. Teacher Rating of Key Staff Survey Qs	4.0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Leadership Development	Instructional Ldrs Proficient on IL Rubric	90%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	ILs per Fellow/Succession Need	1	4	0	0	2	2	3	1

Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2016). *Uncommon Schools and Relay Graduate School of Education, Training Resources* for National Principal Academy Fellows Program

Figure 3. Principal Check In Template

Principal/Principal Manager Agenda Template

DAY, DATE
TIME
SCHOOL

PRINCIPAL GOALS:

AGENDA ITEMS

Time	Discussion Topic	Discussion L
Standing Agenda Items (20 min. total)		
5 min. (total for5 both)	**Bright Spots**	Principal
	Bright Spots	Principal Ma
5 min. (each)	**Data Update**	Principal
5 min. (each)	**Data Update**	Principal Ma
5 min. (total for both)	**School Culture/Staff Update**	Principal
	School Culture/Staff Update	Principal Ma
Deep Dive-Key Levers (75 min. total)		
75 min.	**Deep Dive**	Principal Ma

Principal: For area of focus (identified in previous check-in or by PM), select and add to the template below:

1) 1 teacher to observe in this check-in who is strong
2) 2 teachers to observe in this check-in who have areas of growth

KEY OBSERVATIONS – TEACHER TRACKER

TEACHER	GRADE & ROOM #	GOALS & NEXT STEPS	PRINCIPAL / PM OBSERVATION NOTES
		1)	
		1)	
		1)	

Quick Hits (15 min. total)		
15 min. (total for all four topics)	**Topic 1**	Principal
	Topic 2	Principal
	Topic 3	A/MD
	Topic 4	A/MD
Pulse Check (5 min. total)		
5 min.	Pulse check	
Next Steps (5 min. total): Fill out in template below		

Figure 4. Exemplar Completed PM Template (From Principal to Principal Manager)

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Principal-AMD Weekly Meeting Agenda</td><td>November 10th, 2015
Casey Elementary School</td></tr>
<tr><td>Current Principal Goal(s)</td><td colspan="2">Observation & Feedback and DDI:
• ID Quality Action Steps (especially related to rigor): Identify the highest leverage rigor issue in the class
• Master the weekly data meeting protocol to lead to effective action steps</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Agenda Items</td></tr>
<tr><td>Time</td><td>Discussion Topic</td><td>Discussion Leader</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Standing Agenda Items</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">5 minutes</td><td>Bright Spots
• Guided Reading: Though the real work begins as we need to do a stronger job of pushing our scholars through purposeful charting and conversation, I am proud of my teachers so far and my IL's (namely Dibran) for their work with teachers around GR. The Literacy Content Meeting was great and definitely 201. It was an eye opener for everyone, including Carter. I'm excited to continue to push the envelope around GR (but not pushing too hard). We have had some movement in STEP and I'm excited to see the final results next week!
• LCC: Other than our spring performances, I'm not sure AES has had a stronger culture win than these LCC circles. I was so surprised by the amount of people in our Commons watching our scholars perform. Here is an email from one of our new to NSA parents:

Principal West:
Please allow me to express how so very impressed I am at today's Latino Cultural Morning Circle Exercises. It was my first experience viewing the North Star Scholars in this setting and in short, mind = blown!
Please keep up the good work ... what an excellent program you're running! The students are so poised, disciplined, articulate, ready! & involved! I've never been more content with the direction of my child's education/social progresses. Thank you!

Juliana Windsor
Mom of Seth Windsor</td><td>Principal</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bright Spots
•</td><td>Principal Manager</td></tr>
<tr><td>10 minutes</td><td>Data Update
• 4th Grade Math:</td><td>Principal</td></tr>
</table>

	○ **NBT.6:** 87% between both classes. Students are doing a great job around the standard vocabulary (quotient) and finding whole number quotients and finding equations that match a given quotient. Again, it's about our ability to push the bottom 15% of students. ○ **NBT.2:** 72% between both classes. What we're seeing is that once we're assessing the standard and not problem types that student mastery isn't as high by the end of the week. Even so, this is unacceptable to be below 85% by Friday. Though we're assessing the standard in a variety of ways (ordering, expanded form, written form etc.) we should still be able to reach 85% by Friday. This was low on Friday because the problem gave students the number to put in the place value and it was up to the students to write the correct number. Various students struggled to write the correct number with proper comma placement. ○ **OA.3:** 43% between both classes. Students struggled because not only were these multi-step problems that varied each day BUT for one question each day, they didn't have to solve; rather, they had to write a number sentence that would help them solve. This extra layer of algebraic thinking was really difficult for our students as 4.OA.3 will never stop being a focus for us this year. It will come down to strong conceptualization around the actions and then purposeful charting that can be used as an anchor! **3rd Grade** ○ **OA.3:** 85% between the two classes. The scholars that are remaining to struggle lack one of two things. Either students are struggling with the algebraic component of tasks and cannot write a number sentence that matches the problem or students are still struggling with their conceptual understanding of groups vs. the number in each group to help them solve story problems around multiplication. ○ **NBT.2:** 77% between the two classes. Again pushing flexibility, student error was distributed between the tasks. On one of the tasks, students struggled understanding balanced equations and determining how to find the unknown (algebra) on one side while another batch of students struggled ID'ing a number sentence that matched the problem (also algebra). There's a clear trend in 3rd grade around our L's ability to think at an algebraic level. ○ **MD.7:** 73% between the two classes. Students are struggling with area and the students that struggled on spiral not only struggled with area but struggled following the directions of the task as well (problem solving and reading comp issues). The task asked them to create a shape with an area of 36 square units and instead found the area of the grid the task gave them to represent their shape. Like 4th grade, we see lower percentages because we're assessing the standard, not problem types but this standard should be higher than 73%!	
	•	Principal Manager
10 minutes	**School Culture/Staff Update** • **JR Support:** Supporting Jackelyn on Thursday felt really great for me and for her. I saw a lot of light bulbs go off in her head as we watched instruction in 1st grade and as I pointed out quick hits in each classroom, including her own. She expressed extreme interest in keeping our check-ins and co-observations a regular occurrence and I assured her that they would be. Not only does she feel like she's getting better but she feels like her leadership is growing. Now, I have to ensure it keeps happening and FASTER! • **Survey:** Looking at the survey results was an interesting process for me.	Principal

	Student success is always paramount but making sure people feel good about doing the work is not terribly far behind. I reached out to a few people this past week to gain perspective and will be asking you a lot of questions as we look at the data together! People want more observation and feedback. I have so many thoughts around this regarding what's perceived as "support", teachers taking responsibility for their own growth, and how to charge my IL's around better practices. For better or worse, I may want to live here awhile with you! ☺ • **Francesca:** This week I sat down with Francesca (1st grade, Syracuse) father to learn that Francesca has Leukemia. Needless to say, this was a huge emotional blow for me. Figuring out why/how this could happen to a 7 year old is incredibly frustrating. Stephenson and I told his teachers on Friday and we're telling the staff on Monday. It was an emotional time on Friday and will continue to be as we support their family during this difficult and confusing time.	
	School Culture/Staff Update •	Principal Manager
Deep Dive-Key Levers		

75 minutes	**Leadership Lever Deep Dive**
	• Observation & Feedback: Rigor
	  ○ ID highest leverage issue
	  ○ ID trends across grades
	• Data Driven Instruction – Weekly Data Meetings
		Principal Manager

Principal Pre-Work: For area of focus, select and add to the template below:

3) **Bright Spot:** Select one teacher to observe that is strong in the identified lever
4) **Growing:** Select two teachers to observe that require more development within the identified lever

Key Observations

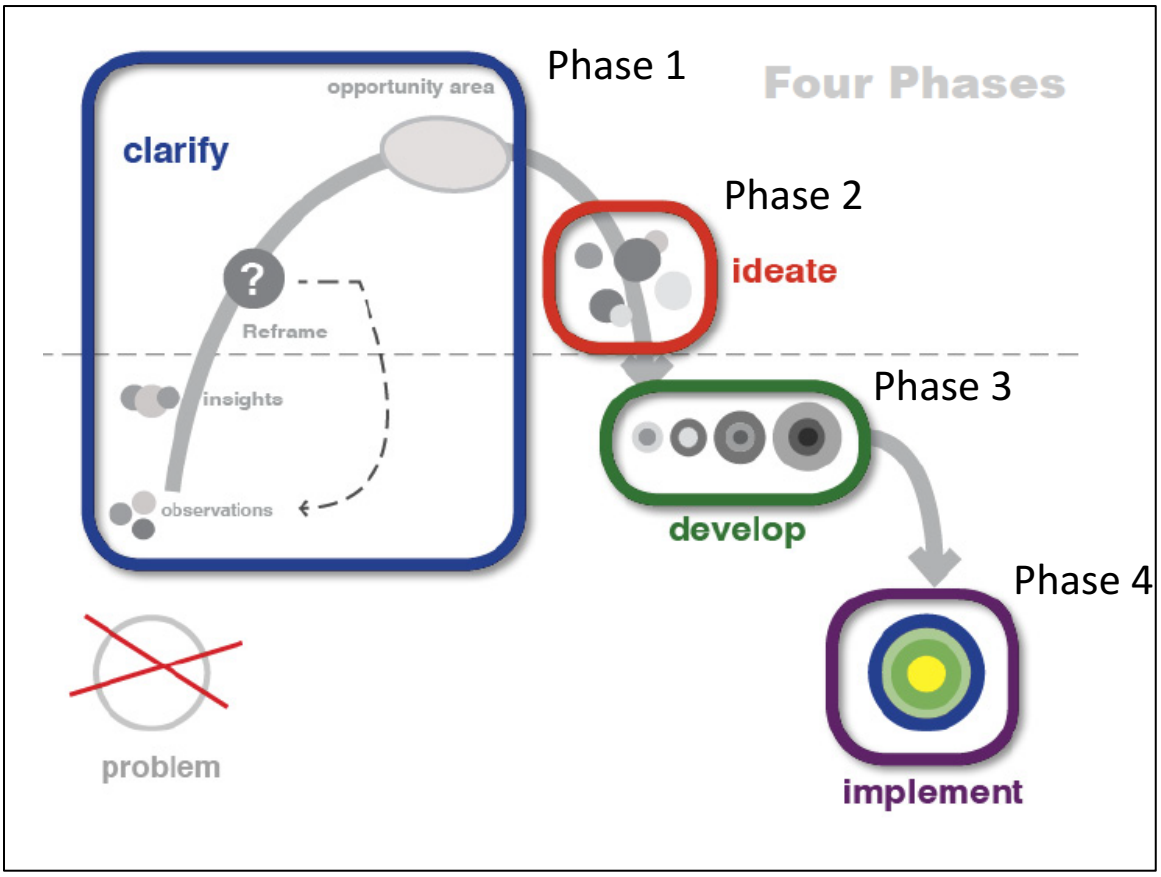
Teacher	Grade Level & Classroom Name	Current PD Goals	Notes on strengths and/or areas of growth within this identified level
Smith	4th/NYU	Book Introductions: Focus on the How 1) Execute What, How, Why 2) Break down the How using a previous read text. "Remembering the book ____, how did we identify (Bottom Line) in this text?" 3) Check for understanding around What, How, and Why 4) Connect the Bottom Line to Focus Question 5) Students read and mark up the question. Ask, "How can we use (Bottom Line) to help us answer this focus question?"	• Bennett is having a breakdown in her comprehension conversations and it's because she didn't do a strong enough job of breaking down the how for students. She's very much following the plan, which was great to start, now we have to really drill down the How so students are practicing perfectly!
Carter	4th/PU	1) Give clear what to do's to build 100%	• Alex, like other math teachers at

		by: -Square up at the corner of the room -Give clear what to do -Pause, Scan, Narrate -Deliver the consequence (if necessary) 2) Break it down/use content-specific prompts: -Before Execution: Complete student work ID'ing the most common student error and script 2-3 prompts to address error trends -During Execution: Aggressively monitor student work to determine error trend -After Execution: Deliver scripted prompts that will address the common error	AES, struggle keeping prompts conceptual in the heat of the moment. Like most of us, she was taught procedural and that's her default during debrief. My work with her has been helping her think through the prompts to address misconception and prompts that will tie to what her L's will say in class.
McNulty	1st, SU	1. Break down the How using a previous read text ○ "Remembering the book ____, how did we identify (Bottom Line) in this text?" 2. Check for understanding around What, How, and Why ○ Connect the Bottom Line to Focus Question ○ Students read and mark up the question ○ o Ask, "How can we use (Bottom Line) to help us answer this focus question?"	• McNulty has been a rock star in her transition. I've been helping her around breaking down bottom lines and how to effectively prompt when there is error.

Quick Hits		
30 minutes (Extended check in to deal with 2 urgent issues)	**Topic 1** • How do I best manage/work with a particularly challenging parent who is threatening to go to the board if I do not drop what I am doing each time she comes to the school to discuss her child's weekly behavior report.	Principal
	Topic 2 • How do I keep up with my observation/feedback schedule while getting pulled away to figure out how to make sure our 8th graders have a decent math teacher?	Principal
Pulse Check		
5 minutes	Pulse check	
Review Next Steps		
5 minutes	Next steps	

Appendix 10: Human Centered Design Process, Adapted from IDEO

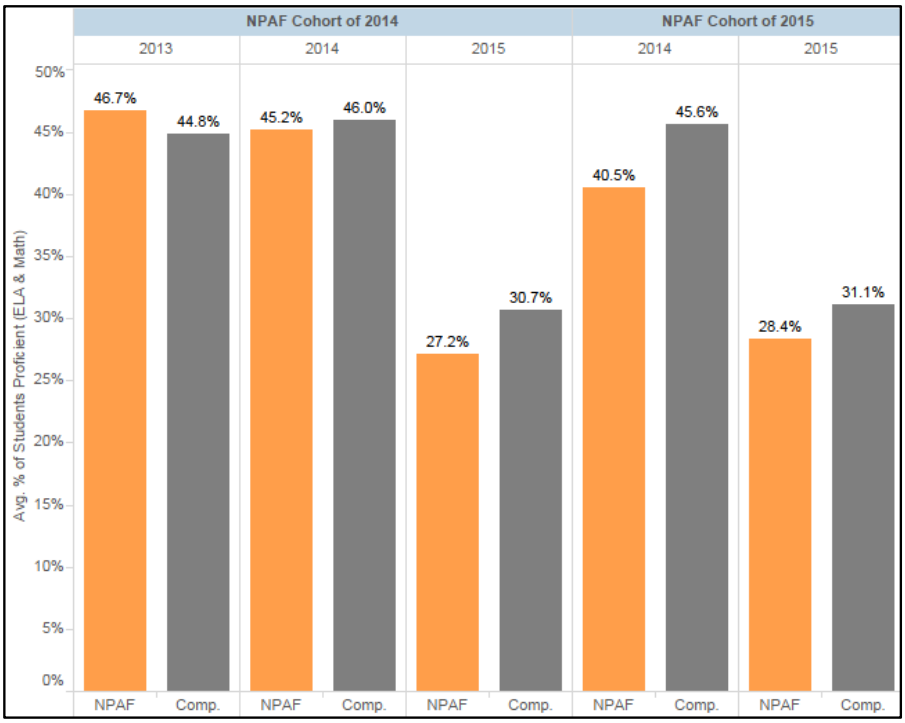
Human Centered Design Process



Datar, S., Lal, R. Harvard Business School, Adapted from IDEO, 2014

Appendix 11: Preliminary Comparison Performance Data of 2014 and 2015 NPAF Cohorts

How did each NPAF Cohort perform relative to its comparison group (i.e. State or District)?



Preliminary Internal Data, Relay Graduate School of Education, 2016

Appendix 12: Structured Interview Questions with Executive Leaders

Questions for Principal Managers

- Name, position, Org, Org Type (D/C), Org performance level (rubric readiness, etc.) (High, Med, Low)
- How many principals are you responsible for?
- Tell me about your network of schools…
- What are your most important student achievement goals for your network?
- Tell me about the performance distribution of schools that you are responsible for…
- Tell me about the distribution of principal performance…
- How do you currently help your principals become more effective instructional leaders?
- (For those that went through NPAF last year) How did practice change following your participation
- Following NPAF, what do you anticipate your principals will most struggle with?
- What do you need in order to best help them implement RELAY practices?
- 5 years from now, if student outcomes have not changed the way you want, what 2-3 things do you anticipate will have happened?
- As we work to design additional supports/content for principal managers, what would you love to see?

Questions for Principals

- Name, position, Org, Org Type, Org performance level (rubric readiness, etc.)
- How many teachers are you responsible for?
- Tell me about your school...
- What are your most important student achievement goals?
- Tell me about the distribution of teacher performance…
- Following NPAF, what do you anticipate your teachers will most struggle with?
- What do you need from your manager in order to best help you implement RELAY practices?
- 5 years from now, if student outcomes have not changed the way you want, what 2-3 things do you anticipate will have happened?
- As we work to design additional supports/content for principal managers, what would you love to see?

Questions for Relay and Uncommon Leaders

- In your mind, what is the theory of action for NPAF...
- Five years out, what kind of scale/impact do we want NPAF to have on the sector?
- Why are principal managers integral to this?
- What is working in the current work with principal managers?
- What would an ideal 2.0 version look like?
- Do you see it operating independently from NPAF?
- What market demand do you believe exists for this?
- Following NPAF, what do you anticipate PM's will most struggle with?
- 2 years from now, if outcomes have not changed the way we hope, what 2-3 things do you anticipate happened?
- What additional supports/content for PMS would mitigate against this?

Appendix 13: Sample Rubric for Course IL-700 Observation and Feedback Module

IL-711: Observation and Feedback II

Rubric Row	(4) Exemplary	(3) Proficient	(2) Foundational	(1) Attempting	(0) Lacking
IL 711: 1 The leader correctly identifies the highest lever issue with an actionable step	a. HIGH-LEVERAGE: The issue identified is highest leverage because it corrects multiple issues, is the clear pre-requisite to being able to fix other things, or is focused on critical content area feedback b. BITE-SIZED: The leader identifies only 1-2 action steps that are accomplishable in the span of one week c. MEASURABLE: The leader identifies an action step that can be assessed by reviewing plans or observing for only 10 minutes	a. HIGH-LEVERAGE: The issue identified corrects a key issue and leads to a concrete action step b. BITE-SIZED: The leader identifies 1-2 action steps that are accomplishable over a couple of weeks c. MEASURABLE: The leader identifies an action step that can be assessed but requires more than reviewing plans or observing for only 10 minutes	a. HIGH-LEVERAGE: The issue identified corrects a particular lesson instead of a teacher skill, and leads to an unclear action step b. BITE-SIZED: The leader provides more than 2 action steps or such broad action steps that the goal is not accomplishable in 1-2 weeks c. MEASURABLE: The leader identifies an action step that is hard to assess	a. HIGH-LEVERAGE: The issue identified does not correct an issue critical to student learning, and leads to an incorrect action step b. BITE-SIZED: The leader provides an action step or multiple action steps that would take at least a month to accomplish c. MEASURABLE: The leader identifies an action step that is not measurable	a. HIGH-LEVERAGE: There is no issue identified b. BITE-SIZED: The leader does not provide an action step c. MEASURABLE: The leader does not identify a measurable action step
IL-711: 2 The leader plans an effective feedback conversation that is aligned to the action step	a. SIX STEPS: All six steps of the feedback conversation are scripted with a high level of detail, (praise, 3-4 probing questions, action step, planning, practice and follow-up), including ideal and anticipated teacher responses that are reflective of the teacher's skill level b. ALIGNMENT: The plan, practice and probing questions are all highly aligned to the action step (the planning sets up teachers to practice the action step in the most authentic and rigorous way possible)	a. SIX STEPS: All six steps of the feedback conversation are scripted in detail, (praise, 3-4 probing questions, action step, planning, practice and follow-up), including ideal and anticipated teacher responses b. ALIGNMENT: The plan, practice and probing questions are all aligned to the action step (the planning sets up teachers to practice the action step in an authentic and rigorous way)	a. SIX STEPS: Three or four of the six steps of the feedback conversation are scripted in detail, (praise, 3-4 probing questions, action step, planning, practice and follow-up) including some ideal and anticipated teacher responses b. ALIGNMENT: One of the six steps is not aligned to the action step	a. SIX STEPS: The plan lacks significant detail for each of the six steps and does not include ideal and anticipated teacher responses b. ALIGNMENT: Two or more of the six steps are not aligned to the action step	a. SIX STEPS: There is no plan for the conversation b. ALIGNMENT: None of the six steps are aligned to the action step

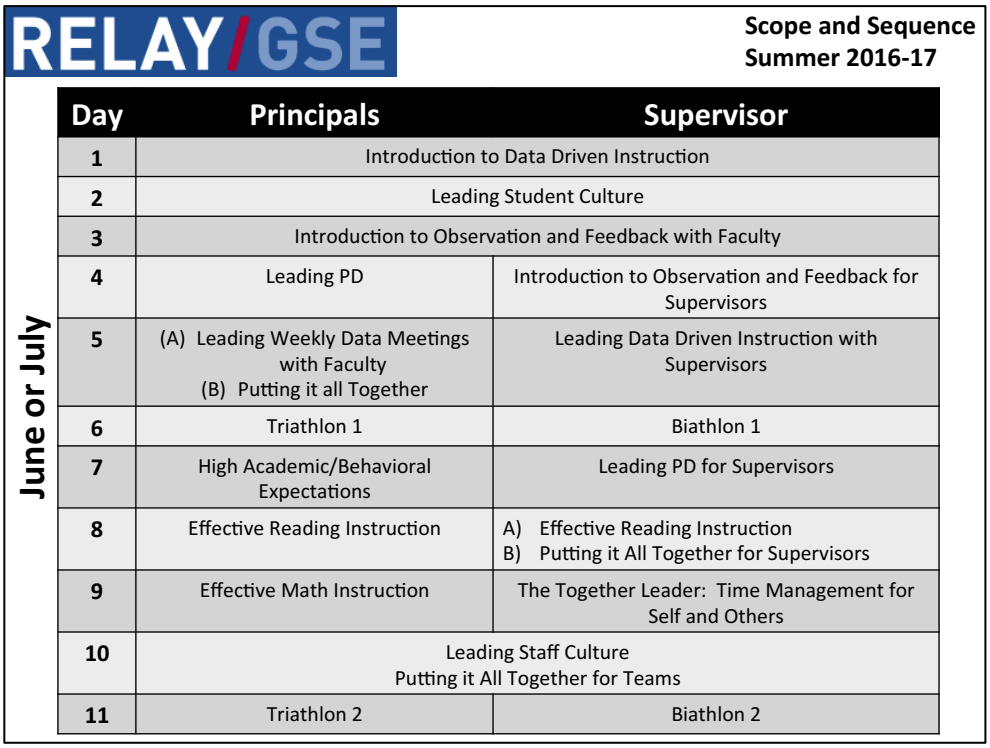
Rubric Row	(4) Exemplary	(3) Proficient	(2) Foundational	(1) Attempting	(0) Lacking
IL-711: 3 The leader leads an effective feedback conversation	a. PRAISE: The leader's praise is genuine, authentic, precise, cites evidence, is connected to a teacher PD goal and gives the teacher an opportunity to reflect in a deep and rigorous way b. PROBE: The leader adeptly asks probing questions that are precise (max 3-4), aligned to the action step and focused on the end goal (lesson objective or assessment) that allows the teacher to analyze the gap (using data or video), close the gap, and arrive at the correct action step c. ACTION STEP: The action step is high-leverage, bite-sized (can accomplish in 1 week), actionable and observable (in plans or 10 min observation) and clearly and concisely named for the teacher and includes a check for understanding d. PLAN: The leader has the teacher prepare for the practice by scripting out key language and questions aligned to the action step into explicit moments of an upcoming lesson plan, prior to practice occurring e. PRACTICE: The leader guarantees that practice is effective in achieving its goal through multiple rounds, Do It Again, real-time feedback and modeling when necessary that end in increasing effectiveness for the teacher f. FOLLOW-UP: The leader has a clear plan to hold the teacher accountable and the teacher writes down clear dates and deliverables into calendar, binder or other organizational system	a. PRAISE: The leader's praise is genuine, authentic, precise, cites evidence, is connected to a teacher PD goal and gives the teacher an opportunity to reflect b. PROBE: The leader asks probing questions that are aligned to the action step and focused on the end goal (lesson objective or assessment) that allows the teacher to analyze the gap and close the gap in less than 5 questions c. ACTION STEP: The action step corrects a key issue (high-leverage) and is clearly named for the teacher, but may require more than one week to achieve or more than lesson plan review or 10 min observation to assess implementation d. PLAN: Action step changes are applied and incorporated into an upcoming lesson plan, prior to practice occurring e. PRACTICE: Leader generally makes sure practice is effective in achieving its goal of building teacher skill f. FOLLOW-UP: The leader has a clear plan to hold the teacher accountable to implementation and the teacher writes down most dates and deliverables into calendar, binder or other organizational system	a. PRAISE: The praise is not succinctly or specifically named, is loosely tied to a PD goal and gives the teacher a weak opportunity to reflect b. PROBE: The opening probe is not related to an end goal of purpose, objective or assessments; the leader unsuccessfully checks for understanding on the gap between what occurred in class and the end goal; the probe does not get to the action step in an efficient way c. ACTION STEP: The action step corrects a particular lesson instead of a teacher skill, is not clearly named for the teacher, and is hard to assess in a 10-15 minute observation or lesson plan review d. PLAN: Action step changes for future lessons are discussed at a high level, but not explicitly incorporated into an upcoming plan; or planning occurs after practice e. PRACTICE: Leader struggles to make sure practice is effective in achieving goal, either by choosing the wrong thing to practice or by not providing targeted feedback on practice f. FOLLOW-UP: The follow-up has one of the appropriate elements	a. PRAISE: The praise is unclear, vague or lacks the appropriate reflection questions b. PROBE: The probing questions are unclear, vague, misaligned or off-topic c. ACTION STEP: The delivery of the action step is unclear and the action step itself may not be high leverage d. PLAN: The planning discussion is unclear or vague e. PRACTICE: The practice is unclear or vague f. FOLLOW-UP: The follow-up is unclear or vague	a. PRAISE: There is no praise b. PROBE: There are no probing questions c. ACTION STEP: There is no action step d. PLAN: Planning does not occur e. PRACTICE: The leader does not incorporate practice f. FOLLOW-UP: Deliverables and dates are not discussed

IL-711

Rubric Row	(4) Exemplary	(3) Proficient	(2) Foundational	(1) Attempting	(0) Lacking
IL-711: 4 The leader reflects on the effectiveness of his leadership in observation and feedback	a. EVIDENCE: The leader provides highly detailed evidence from the video including timestamps and transcripted dialogue to describe areas of strength and areas for growth b. ANALYSIS: The leader provides an accurate, thorough, and detailed analysis of the areas of strength and areas for growth of the conversation	a. EVIDENCE: The leader provides detailed evidence from the video including timestamps and some transcripted quotes to describe areas of strength and areas for growth b. ANALYSIS: The leader provides a thorough and detailed analysis of the areas of strength and areas for growth of the conversation	a. EVIDENCE: The leader provides some evidence from the video but may not include timestamps or transcriptions to describe areas of strength and areas for growth b. ANALYSIS: The leader provides an analysis of the areas of strength and areas for growth of the conversation, but may be lacking in detail	a. EVIDENCE: There is unclear, vague or insufficient evidence and timestamps b. ANALYSIS: There is unclear or insufficient analysis	a. EVIDENCE: There is no evidence or timestamps b. ANALYSIS: There is no analysis of the conversation
IL-711: SWITCH ROW Overall, the leader effectively plans, leads and reflects on observation and feedback	a. OVERALL: The leader demonstrates exemplary ability to plan, lead and reflect on observation and feedback	a. OVERALL: The leader demonstrates proficient ability to plan, lead and reflect on observation and feedback (the six steps of the conversation are aligned to the action step)	a. OVERALL: The leader demonstrates foundational ability to plan, lead and reflect on observation and feedback (there is an action step and practice- but praise, probing questions or follow-up are lacking or misaligned)	a. OVERALL: The leader does not demonstrate the ability to plan, lead and reflect on observation and feedback	a. OVERALL: The leader does not attempt to effectively plan, lead, and/or reflect on observation and feedback

Relay Graduate School of Education, Training Resources for National Principal Academy Fellows Program (2016)

Appendix 14: Draft Scope and Sequence, 2016-17 National Principal Academy Fellows Program, National Principal Supervisor Academy



RELAY/GSE

Scope and Sequence
Summer 2016-17

June or July

Day	Principals	Supervisor
1	Introduction to Data Driven Instruction	
2	Leading Student Culture	
3	Introduction to Observation and Feedback with Faculty	
4	Leading PD	Introduction to Observation and Feedback for Supervisors
5	(A) Leading Weekly Data Meetings with Faculty (B) Putting it all Together	Leading Data Driven Instruction with Supervisors
6	Triathlon 1	Biathlon 1
7	High Academic/Behavioral Expectations	Leading PD for Supervisors
8	Effective Reading Instruction	A) Effective Reading Instruction B) Putting it All Together for Supervisors
9	Effective Math Instruction	The Together Leader: Time Management for Self and Others
10	Leading Staff Culture Putting it All Together for Teams	
11	Triathlon 2	Biathlon 2

RELAY/GSE

Scope and Sequence
Fall Semester 2016-17

October

Day	Principals	Supervisor
1	Leading Weekly Data Meetings	
2	A) Leading Planning B) O/F w/ Faculty	A) Leading Planning B) O/F with Principals
3	Continuously Increasing Effectiveness	

December

Day	Principals	Supervisor
1	A) O/F Real Time Feedback B) Weekly Data Meetings	A) O/F Real Time Feedback B) Data Driven Instruction for Supervisors
2	Rigorous Reading	A) Rigorous Reading B) Leading Principal teams
3	Reset Planning	

RELAY/GSE

Scope and Sequence
Spring Semester 2016-17

February

Day	Principals	Supervisor
1	A) Follow Through w/ PD for Principals B) Weekly Data Meetings III	A) Follow-through with PD for Supervisors B) Weekly Data Meetings III
2	A) O/F for Principals B) High Academic Expectations	A) O/F for Supervisors B) High Academic Expectations
3	Rigorous Math Instruction	Strategic Planning for Supervisors

May

Day	Principals	Supervisor
1	A) Practice Labs in O/F and WDM B) Sustaining Improvement	
2	Strategic Planning for Next Year	

Appendix 15: Readiness Assessment (sample)

RELAY/GSE
GRADUATE SCHOOL of EDUCATION

RELAY Leadership Program and Partner Readiness Assessment

The purpose of this tool is to help RELAY assess the readiness of prospective partners to implement RELAY's approach to instructional improvement. Given the urgency of this work, the commitment required to align school improvement initiatives, and the complex nature implementation, this tool has been designed to help RELAY and prospective partners evaluate the likelihood of a productive and impactful partnership.

RELAY ESSENTIALS	Yes/No	Explain
Ability to attend, and be present, for the entirety of summer intensive (dates) and four intersessions (dates)		
Commitment to prioritize and submit all program assessments that include: • Videos of practice • Planning documents • Self assessments		
Access to Technology (personal laptop, internet access, proficiency to create zip files, upload files to the web, etc.) NPAF Norms		
A champion in an executive leadership position who will make this work a priority		
Any additional information/special circumstances that we need to know about?		

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Instructional Levers Participant Assessment

Directions: The following self assessment is intended to gather information regarding the current state of implementation of the super levers of instructional leadership and to gauge prospective participant "skill and will" to execute within their system. Please assess

Lever 1: Data Driven Instruction *Participant demonstrates a commitment to strategically using student achievement data to improve teaching and learning.*	**Current State** 1. Not in place 2. Inconsistent 3. Mostly in place 4. Entirely in place	**Skill to Execute** 1. Low 2. Average 3. High 4. Outstanding	**Will to Execute** 1. Low 2. Average 3. High 4. Outstanding
• High quality, rigorous, and standards aligned interim assessments administered 4-6 times/year in core subject areas			
• Data driven instructional calendar that teachers and leaders will use to plan, administer, analyze, and create instructional action plans based on assessment results			
• System for leaders and teachers to collaboratively develop lesson plans and units that are responsive to data and are tightly aligned to standards and end of year assessments.			
DDI Average	_____ Current Implementation	_____ Current Skill	_____ Current Will

Appendix 16: Principal Supervisor Self Assessment

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Principal Supervisor Self Assessment Instructions: Please assess the current implementation levels of Paul Bambrick's five "super levers" of instructional leadership for both you and your principals: Data Driven Instruction, Student Culture, Observations and Feedback, Leading Adult Professional Development and Staff Culture. Tally your score at the bottom of each page and transfer this number to the summary table on page 6.	**Scale** 1. **Not at all** 2. **Inconsistently** 3. **Mostly** 4. **Fully**	
Leading Data Driven Instruction		
To what extent do you and your principals:	Principal supervisor	Principal
1. Have (or have the ability to create or adopt) high quality interim assessments in place across grades and subjects that are aligned to end-goal assessments (state tests, college entrance exams, etc.)		
2. Have a system to create, implement, and monitor aligned lesson/curriculum materials (that include "do nows", HW, in-class assessments) that meet or exceed the rigor of the assessments		
3. Can masterfully conduct deep analysis of school wide and individual teacher data so that school wide patterns (high and low outliers) can be identified and be used to create effective action plans.		
4. Can lead effective an effective interim assessment analysis cycle so that teachers are guided to see exemplar student answers, analyze trends, create high leverage action plans, and monitor action plans to guarantee effective reteaching (using monitoring tools, student work analysis, and classroom observations)		
5. Hold teachers accountable to prepare and engage in weekly data meetings that ensure that teachers analyze and use daily student work to identify exemplars, identify the gaps between exemplars and non exemplars, and create action plans based on gaps in student learning.		
6. Lead effective lesson/unit planning activities that are connected to the trends that the data shows.		
Total DDI Score	___x2=____/48	___x2=____/48
Regarding data driven instruction, what 2 supports would best help you build the expertise, organizational systems, or motivation of your team to take this work to the next level? **1.** **2.**		

Name_____ School/System_____

Appendix 17: Principal Sequence of Action Steps

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PRINCIPAL ACTION STEPS
Sequence of Highest Leverage Action Steps
for Top-Tier Principal Managers 2015-16

LEVER:	KEY ACTIONS IN SEQUENCE:
OBSERVATION & FEEDBACK	**1. Implement Weekly Observation Schedule** • Establish and maintain own observation schedule & observation tracker **2. ID Quality Action Steps** • Identify the highest leverage issue in the class (using Rookie Teacher S&S as a resource) • Create actions steps that are measureable, observable and bite-sized • Identify school-wide trends to ID common action steps for grade-level or school-wide PD **3. Plan & Practice** • Have teacher prepare for the practice by scripting out action steps/key language prior to practice • Ensure that teacher practices what is most important for the action step • Always pick appropriate moment to stop the practice and give quick feedback, and have teacher re-do the practice until effective • Pick right moments to model live if teaching is struggling with practice • Add layers of complexity to role play as teacher masters the action step **4. Follow-up** • Set clear dated deliverables written into the leader's & teacher's meeting binders or calendar • Collect evidence of action step mastery to ensure teachers are progressing **5. Probe** • Develop effective and concise sequence of probing questions: o start from the end goal; identify the gap; close the gap • Check for teacher understanding of their own practice • Choose right moment to present a model of good instruction (video or role play) to get to a precise action step **6. Praise** • Develop genuine moments of affirmation that are organically embedded into feedback meetings • Link praise to previous action steps • Ask teachers to reflect on the impact of their own improvements **7. Realtime Feedback** • Choose appropriate moments for realtime classroom feedback • Give realtime feedback in a way that supports the flow of the class • Effectively use nonverbal signals to cue teachers to the error • Gives teacher clear "What to Do"

Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2016). *Uncommon Schools and Relay Graduate School of Education, Training Resources* for National Principal Academy Fellows Program